



THE
HISTORY
OF
Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK.

VOL. I.



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VOL. I

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C O N F L I C T :
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O F

Miſs SOPHIA FANBROOK.

I N T H R E E V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

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BOOK I.

IN the Windsor coach, at its near arrival to that celebrated town, two ladies only remained; the one considerably older than the other, but a very agreeable woman for her time of life, which was about forty. The younger, who did not appear to have seen near half those years, was of the middle size, and very genteely made; but her face was so enveloped

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veloped in a large bonnet, that it was not very easy to discover whether she was handsome or homely. When the rest of the passengers, however, were set down, who did not live so far as Mrs. Romney (for that was the elder lady's name) and were of an inferior station, she began to exhibit a little more of her countenance, which was of the oval shape, and slightly marked with the small pox, from which she seemed not to have been long recovered. Her eyes were dark, but there was an expression in them extremely pleasing. Her nose was well made; she had a small mouth, and tolerable teeth, and every part of her neck and arms which was visible, was remarkable for its whiteness. All these personal advantages being observed by Mrs. Romney, she thought she had some knowledge of her, and therefore, with a short apology, asked her her name. 'Fanbrook, madam,' replied the young lady, who seemed from the chearful behaviour of her companion to recover her spirits, which were before much depressed. 'I thought I had seen you somewhere,' said Mrs. Romney, and could not
recollect

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‘recollect where; but now I believe it
‘was at Mrs. Greville’s, who is my very
‘near neighbour at Windsor.’ ‘To that
‘lady, madam, replied Miss Fanbrook,
‘I am going; she is my aunt.’ ‘I am
‘afraid then, madam, said Mrs. Romney,
‘that you will meet with a disappoint-
‘ment, for Mrs. Greville is from home
‘at present, being gone upon a visit to a
‘family about seven miles off.’

This piece of intelligence greatly dis-
concerted Miss Fanbrook, who expressed
much uneasiness at it; but added, that
she could blame nobody but herself:
‘All my vexations, indeed, in life, con-
‘tinued she, have arisen chiefly from that
‘source. I wrote to my aunt, about ten
‘days ago, to let her know my intentions
‘of spending some time with her, and
‘afterwards informed her that I could
‘not wait on her. But you see, madam,
‘I have again changed my mind, and
‘am afraid shall thereby subject myself
‘to no small inconveniences, as I must
‘immediately return to London.’

‘ There is no occasion for so quick a
‘ return to London, said Mrs. Romney,
‘ with an obliging smile, for I shall be
‘ very glad of your company till my
‘ friend comes back.’

The young lady answered this civility at first only by saying, ‘ You are extremely obliging, madam.’ But after a little hesitation, she told Mrs. Romney, that if she was not apprehensive of being troublesome, she would accept of her kind invitation, till she could write to her aunt, and acquaint her of her arrival.

As Mrs. Romney was quite pleased with her frankness upon this occasion, she said and did every thing in her power to make herself agreeable to her young guest; and her assiduities had the desired effect, for she soon began to throw off a great deal of reserve, though a soft and not unpleasing melancholy remained, which Mrs. Romney, with her utmost endeavours, could not totally remove.

Soon after their arrival, when they had taken some refreshment, Miss Fanbrook
sat

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sat down to write an account of herself to her aunt, and Mrs. Romney desired she would not hurry her home sooner than she intended. After her letter was dispatched, her new friend shewed her her house, which though small, was every where neat and convenient; and on the next morning, as it proved very pleasant, Mrs. Romney proposed to walk upon the Terrace.

When they had taken a few turns, a very genteel young fellow, with an uncommon seriousness in his aspect, passed them; I say uncommon seriousness, for he passed without taking the least notice of them. Few old men, unless they are professed women-haters, behold the fair sex with total indifference.

This serious young fellow, however, though he paid no regard to the ladies above-mentioned, was not unnoticed by them. Mrs. Romney being arrived to a period of life when women are not regarded for their person, looked at him as she would have looked at one of her own sex, and out of curiosity to see what

effect a view of her companion had on him, who, though not a complete beauty, had something so agreeable in her manner, that every body on the walk, but the aforesaid serious gentleman, took notice of her in a way very flattering to female vanity.

Miss Fanbrook, whose eyes were wandering with a seeming inattention over the beautiful prospect around her, just threw them upon the gentleman as he brushed by her, and, at the sight of him, started as if wakened from a dream. So sudden, so unexpected was the impression which he made upon her, that she had neither presence of mind, nor power to conceal it.

Mrs. Romney took no notice of her companion's embarrassment, but continued her walking in hopes that a turn or two might develop the meaning of her mystical behaviour. She was disappointed however, for the gentleman who occasioned all this perturbation in these two ladies (though the disquietude of the one was very different from that of the other)

returned

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returned no more, and was out of sight when they arrived at the end of the Terrace.

As Mrs. Romney met with several of her acquaintance, to whom she introduced Miss Fanbrook, she prolonged her walk till it was time to dress before dinner: but though they were accosted by several agreeable people of both sexes, Miss Fanbrook appeared to be buried in a profound reverie, and paid not the least attention to any thing that was said.

After dinner, when the cloth was taken away and the servants were dismissed, Mrs. Romney began to rally her young friend, though in a very gentle manner, upon the agitation which she was seized with at the sight of the agreeable young fellow whom they had met in the morning.

‘ Dear madam, said Miss Fanbrook, ‘ blushing extremely, how very observing you are; do you really think him agreeable?’ ‘ He seemed so, my dear,’ replied Mrs. Romney, as he passed,
B 4 ‘ from

‘ from the slight glance I had of him ;
‘ and I confess, that the apparent similitude in your serious countenance, added
‘ to the surprize with which you looked at
‘ the sight of him, has excited a curiosity in
‘ me, which perhaps I ought not to discover
‘ too freely ; but as you are, in a manner,
‘ at present under my care, I think I
‘ ought not to endeavour to suppress it,
‘ because it may probably be a service to
‘ you. Were I a young woman, like
‘ yourself, I might not, it is likely, be a
‘ proper person to be trusted with love-
‘ affairs, because youth and discretion
‘ are seldom united ; and to the want of
‘ discretion, half the disappointments in
‘ those affairs are owing. But an old
‘ woman, one who is the friend of your
‘ family and yourself, my dear, and one
‘ who can be neither liable to envy nor
‘ jealousy upon such an occasion, has, I
‘ apprehend, some little right to wish for
‘ an explanation of your behaviour this
‘ morning.’

‘ You speak so mildly to me, madam,
‘ said Miss Fanbrook, and so sensibly, that
‘ I shall no longer scruple to open my
‘ heart

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‘ heart to you: but as I must, in so doing,
‘ discover innumerable errors, to say no
‘ worse of them, I am afraid I shall never
‘ be able to comply with your request:
‘ besides, in order to understand perfectly
‘ the motives for my behaviour, you ought
‘ to be acquainted with my most secret
‘ thoughts, even from the first moment
‘ that I knew the meaning of that word.’

‘ Well, my dear, said Mrs. Romney,
‘ such a retrospect may not only be proper
‘ but necessary. It may be proper to in-
‘ form me of your secret thoughts, and it
‘ may be necessary for yourself to review
‘ them. We do not always immediately
‘ trace our actions to their hidden springs;
‘ but by reflecting frequently upon them,
‘ we are the better enabled to regulate our
‘ conduct.’

‘ I am sure, replied Miss Fanbrook, if
‘ I had reflected properly on my actions,
‘ I should not have been so unhappy as I
‘ now am. But if you can hear me pati-
‘ ently, Madam, you shall judge, for I
‘ must begin the little history of my life
‘ at an early period.

‘ My mother, continued she, was the
‘ eldest of four sisters, the daughters of a
‘ country gentleman who had but a small
‘ estate ; but brought his family now-and-
‘ then to London to see their relations,
‘ and to buy new cloaths. In one of those
‘ excursions, my mother, and her second
‘ sister, were taken great notice of at a
‘ public place, by two gentlemen who
‘ were near them, and who made use of
‘ all the opportunities such places give,
‘ of making an acquaintance. They soon
‘ became in love with them, and in a short
‘ time afterwards married them, with
‘ their father’s approbation. As they
‘ were both young in their profession,
‘ which was the law, as well as in their
‘ persons, they had no right to expect
‘ large fortunes with their wives : and my
‘ grand-father’s income would not permit
‘ him to give much money with his
‘ daughters. Mr. West, who married my
‘ aunt, had very genteel connections, by
‘ which his business was indeed much in-
‘ creased, but his family expences were
‘ also greatly enlarged ; for such connec-
‘ tions can never be cheaply supported ;
‘ so that he was rendered incapable of
‘ laying

' laying up much for his little daughter
 ' Juliet, who did not come into the world
 ' till three years after I was born. My fa-
 ' ther, who was of a more serious disposi-
 ' tion than my uncle, applied with rather
 ' more assiduity to business, and in all hu-
 ' man probability would have enriched
 ' his family, had he lived to pursue it;
 ' but he died of a violent fever, seven
 ' years after he married my mother, leav-
 ' ing her and myself with only a small in-
 ' come for our subsistence. The loss of
 ' so indulgent a husband, for he was ex-
 ' travagantly fond of my mother, threw
 ' her into a disorder which terminated in
 ' her death about a year afterwards; by
 ' which I was left an orphan, at nine
 ' years of age, under the care of Mr.
 ' Besfield, who married my mother's se-
 ' cond sister. As my mother's illness had
 ' been very expensive, as soon as she was
 ' buried, and every thing was settled,
 ' there remained on'y two thousand
 ' pounds for my fortune, to which I had
 ' no prospect of any addition, for my
 ' grand-father died three or four years
 ' before. My aunt Greville married,
 ' and had a son; and my uncle Besfield

‘ had then three or four children; but as
‘ he was a man of great integrity, a d
‘ great good-nature, he made himself so
‘ agreeable to the family that he came
‘ into, that my father and mother in-
‘ trusted him with their child and her
‘ little fortune; and in about four years
‘ afterwards, upon the death of my uncle
‘ West, he found himself also guardian
‘ and executor to their daughter Juliet.
‘ I do not remember that I ever felt a
‘ more sincere joy in my life, than when
‘ my cousin Juliet came to live with us.
‘ My uncle’s children were now reduced
‘ to two, and being boys were at school;
‘ so that I had no play-fellow, till the ar-
‘ rival of Miss West, who was at that
‘ time quite a child, and being idolized
‘ by her parents, was treated with great
‘ tenderness by her uncle and aunt, that
‘ she might be the less sensible of the loss
‘ she had sustained, who likewise behaved
‘ very kindly to me, particularly my
‘ uncle. He took a fancy to me because
‘ I shewed a stronger propensity to read-
‘ ing, than girls at my age commonly
‘ did, which propensity he, with no small
‘ delight, encouraged in me Miss West
‘ was

' was of a different turn, and for some
 ' years discovered no peculiarity in her dis-
 ' position, except an uncommon attention
 ' to her own person, which, as she was
 ' from her birth very beautiful, and every
 ' day improving, no-body wondered at.
 ' She was, though perhaps vain from her
 ' cradle, extremely good-humoured; but
 ' I soon began to behold her with the
 ' eyes of envy, and whenever I was told
 ' that she was the sweetest-tempered crea-
 ' ture in the world, always replied, that she,
 ' of all people in the world, had the least
 ' reason to be otherwise, as she never had
 ' any occasion to be discontented, or even
 ' displeased with her person, which soon
 ' began to be admired by every-body;
 ' for by that time she was thirteen years
 ' old, she was very tall of her age; her
 ' shape easy; her complexion of a lovely
 ' white, and she had the finest colour
 ' imaginable in her cheeks: her eyes
 ' were of a fine soft blue; her eye-lashes
 ' remarkably long and thick, of the same
 ' colour with her air, which was of a
 ' light brown, and as glossy as satin.
 ' Her nose was handsome; her mouth
 ' was reckoned extremely pretty, and her
 ' teeth

‘teeth were small, white, and regularly
‘even. Such was, such is, Madam, the
‘person of Miss West, which I believe,
‘the most impartial judge must allow
‘to be very handsome. But to return to
‘our infancy. It is impossible to con-
‘ceive two girls more delighted with each
‘other than we were, after our first com-
‘ing to live together. The same room,
‘the same bed, and the same chair would
‘have contained us, if it had been large
‘enough. We knew no joy but in eat-
‘ing, dressing, playing, and sleeping to-
‘gether, and were, from the moment
‘she entered the house, inseparable com-
‘panions. This violent friendship re-
‘mained unshaken for five years. The
‘first shock it then received, was from
‘my having overheard a conversation
‘which passed between my uncle and
‘aunt, in which my cousin and I were
‘interested. We both slept in a cham-
‘ber which joined so close to my aunt’s
‘dressing-room, that it was impossible for
‘either of us to speak a word without
‘being overheard through the wainscot.
‘This circumstance my aunt was aware
‘of; but having just sent Miss West
‘from

‘ from her, who was drest ready to pay
 ‘ a visit to a distant relation of her fa-
 ‘ ther’s, and thinking that I was below
 ‘ stairs, she thus addressed my uncle.’

‘ Upon my word, my dear, Juliet
 ‘ grows a very fine girl: I wish she does
 ‘ not soon give us a great deal of trouble
 ‘ with the lovers which so beautiful a
 ‘ person must naturally attract. I declare
 ‘ I do not know any thing more dif-
 ‘ ficult to take proper care of than a
 ‘ handsome girl; one is never secure of
 ‘ them.’ ‘ Well, child, said my uncle, do
 ‘ not be so alarmed: Juliet is a pretty
 ‘ girl to be sure, but she has an unmean-
 ‘ ing countenance; and though her com-
 ‘ plexion is good, and her features are
 ‘ regular, she does not please me half so
 ‘ much as my Sophy (meaning m., ma-
 ‘ dam) and I shall be now obliged, if I
 ‘ adhere strictly to truth, to repeat several
 ‘ good-natured things that were said of
 ‘ me, to ballance which I shall most freely
 ‘ and impartially confess all my failings,
 ‘ which I hope —

‘ A truce

‘ A truce to all apologies, my dear, interrupted Mrs. Romney, smiling; stick only to truth, and go on with your narration.’ Miss Fanbrook bowed and obeyed.

‘ My kind uncle then, madam, continued she, said that I had a sensibility in my countenance and manner which took with him, and would, he thought, with all men of understanding, before the most regular set of features in the world.’ ‘ Understanding, replied my aunt, is entirely out of the question. When we see a fine woman, we are struck with admiration at once, and do not stay till our understanding gives us leave to like her. I am of opinion that the mind has mighty little to do in these matters; though I do not deny but that Sophy is the most entertaining girl in conversation. Take my word, however, for it, my dear, Juliet will have the greatest number of admirers, because there are a greater number of men who take their pleasure at their eyes than their hearts. A man must have sense, taste, and delicacy, to be charmed
‘ with

‘ with a woman’s understanding, but
 ‘ every *Cymon* can see when she is hand-
 ‘ some.’

‘ Well, my dear, answered my uncle,
 ‘ who was pleased with his wife’s vivacity,
 ‘ I will not dispute this point with you
 ‘ now; you are perhaps from experience,
 ‘ a better judge of it than I am.’ They
 ‘ then began to talk of indifferent things,
 ‘ to which I could pay no attention, so
 ‘ busy were my reflections on what had
 ‘ been thrown out by them before; and
 ‘ I must confess to you, madam, that my
 ‘ aunt’s first speech was the most cutting
 ‘ one I had ever heard. I had not, till
 ‘ that moment, any idea of envy or jea-
 ‘ lousy, but from that moment they took
 ‘ too strong a possession of my breast,
 ‘ ever to be eradicated. I had till now
 ‘ regarded my cousin with the eyes of
 ‘ inclination and friendship; but when I
 ‘ found that she was so evidently to have
 ‘ the preference above me, I could no
 ‘ longer look upon her in the light I had
 ‘ formerly done. In vain did I flatter
 ‘ myself with the praises which my uncle
 ‘ bestowed on my sensibility, and with
 ‘ the

‘ the favourable mention which my aunt
‘ made of my conversible talents. She
‘ who had, I knew, no small knowledge
‘ of the world, had declared that Juliet
‘ would have the greater number of ad-
‘ mirers, and even seemed to think that
‘ they would be numerous enough to
‘ give her relations disturbance. This
‘ was sufficient to make me wretched.
‘ Unfortunately for me, I had a great
‘ desire of being admired, nay, of being
‘ preferred to my cousin; and as this, in
‘ my aunt’s opinion, was not at all likely
‘ to happen, I grew discontented, uneasy,
‘ and consequently unhappy. I watched
‘ Juliet with the most minute attention.
‘ Her every motion was of consequence
‘ enough to be observed by me. The
‘ motion also of every person who beheld
‘ her, was noticed by me with equal
‘ eagerness. The result of my curiosity,
‘ eagerness, and attention, was, that I
‘ saw, or imagined I saw, an hourly in-
‘ crease of vanity, self-conceit, coquetry,
‘ and affectation in her; and in every man
‘ who approached her, the most passio-
‘ nately fond, and the most disinterested
‘ lover, that ever breathed in the pages
‘ of

‘ of a romance. In short, my mind be-
 ‘ ing crowded with these cruel ideas, I
 ‘ had no rest night or day ; for my whole
 ‘ time was employed in observing my
 ‘ cousin, and in endeavouring, by every
 ‘ artifice in my power, to render her less
 ‘ attractive. But I very frequently had
 ‘ the mortification to see my schemes de-
 ‘ feated, and to find that her charms
 ‘ were increased by the very means which
 ‘ I had taken to lessen them.

‘ In this manner we continued to live
 ‘ for two years, at the end of which Ju-
 ‘ liet was fifteen : I was three years older.
 ‘ As I had never discovered the malignity
 ‘ of my heart, but had always behaved
 ‘ externally with the greatest regard to
 ‘ Miss West ; neither she nor any of the
 ‘ family perceived the rancour of my own
 ‘ mind, while it was exerted to prejudice
 ‘ my rival. And in what, after all, did
 ‘ she rival me ? There was not the slight-
 ‘ est contention between us about any
 ‘ real person, for we neither of us yet
 ‘ had any declared lovers ; nor had I yet
 ‘ seen a man whom I wished to be par-
 ‘ ticular in his addresses to me, and to
 ‘ make

‘ make a fair declaration. Very ridicu-
‘ lous then, madam, not to say worse,
‘ was certainly my behaviour; I never
‘ reflect upon it, but with the utmost
‘ abhorrence; and yet my then behaviour
‘ was innocent, compared to that into
‘ which my follies afterwards hurried me.

‘ While I was thus taken up in mark-
‘ ing the progress which my cousin made
‘ among her admirers, I became myself
‘ the object of a young gentleman’s atten-
‘ tion, and of such a man, madam, that
‘ every woman in her senses, particularly
‘ any woman in my situation, would have
‘ been proud of. He was the son of a
‘ gentleman, who had a small paternal
‘ estate, and had been a neighbour of
‘ my grandfather’s, and who was much
‘ esteemed by him. As he had a very
‘ extraordinary character (which his son
‘ inherits) young Beecher (for that is his
‘ name) received a genteel education:
‘ as he was an only child, and much be-
‘ loved by his father, who did not chuse
‘ to send him from home, he lived always
‘ under his eye, and never followed any
‘ profession. They were equally attached

‘ to

‘ to each other, and were extravagantly
‘ fond of a country life.

‘ About a year before I became ac-
‘ quainted with Mr. Beecher, his father
‘ died; and his grief was so great for the loss
‘ of him, that it threw him into a severe
‘ fit of illness, from which when he re-
‘ vived, he was so melancholy and de-
‘ jected, that a friend to the family, who
‘ had a sincere regard for him, almost
‘ forced him up to London (so loth was
‘ he to leave the place which he dearly
‘ loved, though it filled him with the
‘ most poignant sorrow) in hopes that the
‘ variety of new scenes and new objects
‘ which he would there meet with, might
‘ give a chearful turn to his spirits, and
‘ dissipate his gloomy ideas. As both
‘ his friend and himself were known by
‘ my aunt, it was natural to suppose that
‘ they should pay their respects to her
‘ upon their arrival in town. She receiv-
‘ ed them with that cordiality with which
‘ she welcomed those who had merited
‘ her father’s esteem, and gave them fre-
‘ quent invitations to our house, in which
‘ my uncle heartily joined, as he soon
‘ took

‘ took a very particular inclination for
‘ young Beecher, who is perhaps one of
‘ the most amiable men you can imagine.
‘ His genteel figure, his dejected air, and
‘ his melancholy habit, all conspired to
‘ make him an interesting object. One
‘ could not behold his languid looks;
‘ one could not hear his plaintive sighs,
‘ without feeling the tenderest compas-
‘ sion for him; without partaking of his
‘ sorrows, and without endeavouring to
‘ soothe them.

‘ These were my sentiments, madam,
‘ on the first sight of him, and the pity I
‘ felt for him, soon grew into a softer pas-
‘ sion: but the approaches from the first
‘ to the last were so gradual, that I was
‘ not for some time sensible of them.

‘ As Mr. Beecher came very often to
‘ see my uncle, and as often declared how
‘ much he was pleased with the friendly
‘ reception he found in his family, I had
‘ not the least suspicion that he entertain-
‘ ed any particular regard for me. I
‘ watched, indeed, to see how he behaved
‘ to my cousin; and not finding that he
‘ beheld

‘ beheld her with striking marks of ad-
‘ miration, but rather viewed her with
‘ eyes of indifference, I was less disposed
‘ to be alarmed about him than any other
‘ person who came to the house. It was,
‘ perhaps, the indifference with which
‘ he behaved to my cousin, which first
‘ awakened in me particular sensations in
‘ his favour, though I would rather flat-
‘ ter myself with thinking that his un-
‘ common merit produced them.

‘ As to Juliet, she was so accustomed
‘ to admiration, that she expected it from
‘ every mortal who came within the glance
‘ of her eyes; but when she perceived
‘ that Beecher surveyed her charms with-
‘ out any visible emotion, she began to
‘ look upon him as a creature void of sen-
‘ sibility; a stupid wretch; and gave her-
‘ self no trouble to attract his attention.’

A rap at Mrs. Romney’s door inter-
rupted Miss Fanbrook in this part of her
narrative, and the servant immediately
announced lady Elizabeth Ropy and her
husband.

This

This lady was really a woman of rank; but as the gentleman had no other title to it, but the acquisition of half a million in the East Indies, he was only plain Mr. ——. With this single appellation, however, he seemed to exact as much homage by the haughtiness of his carriage, as if he had been the first peer in the kingdom.

Mr. Ropy was a tall, stately, corpulent figure, who held up his head so extremely high, that no-body lower than himself in stature had the least chance of being noticed by him; for he seldom condescended to cast his eye down upon those who approached him. To converse with him was an honour not to be expected, for beyond the two monosyllables yes and no, few words found a passage from his lips: those monosyllables were rendered still shorter by the manner in which he uttered them, and were generally delivered by themselves, without the additional ones of sir and madam, to take off the abruptness of their brevity. His dress, though summer shone in his face with her brightest rays,

rays, was immensely rich; and the true eastern strut was distinguished in all his steps.

Lady Elizabeth was diametrically the reverse of her husband. She was a little, lean, lively woman, about five and thirty; but, by a continual and close pursuit of what is generally called pleasure, she looked about ten years older. However, by the happy help of rouge, curls, and the most elegant refinements of the toilette, together with a prodigious share of vivacity, she was, take her all in all, not disagreeable. Her eternal garrulity made amends for the taciturnity of her husband, whom she had married, because she wanted a large sum for play, and a set of jewels, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. suitable to her rank in life. But though she was extravagantly fond of shew, she did not appear over-loaded with finery: her ornaments, though brilliant, were genteel: she had also taste enough to prefer a plain lustring negligee, as the weather was sultry, to a richer silk. She entered the room with all the ease of a woman of fashion, and immediately fell

into familiar chat with Mrs. Romney, while Mr. Ropy, as stiff as a stake, fixed himself in the chair which stood near him, and only assented with a gracious nod to what his lady and Mrs. Romney advanced in the course of the conversation.

As to Miss Fanbrook, she at the first sight of him changed colour, and seemed ready to faint away; but the alteration in her countenance was not immediately observed by her friend, who was too much engaged in receiving her visitors to attend to her; but turning her head soon afterwards, in order to ask her opinion of something, that she might have an opportunity to join in the conversation with them, she was quite astonished to see her so much altered. ‘ Bless me, ‘ Miss Fanbrook, said she, are you not ‘ well?’ Before she could answer, Mr. Ropy, who was not deaf, upon hearing her name, with a kind of half smile, and an awkward confusion in his manner, as if he ought to have taken notice of her before, muttered out a few words which seemed to have been designed for complimentary ones, but which died away
upon

upon his lips before they could be distinctly heard.

This attempt towards politeness in Mr. Ropy engaged the attention of his lady towards the young person, and put her upon thinking who she could be; but finding, upon examination, that she knew nothing of her, she withdrew her eyes from her, and continued her conversation with Mrs. Romney, giving thereby great relief to Miss Fanbrook, who, unable to conceal the agitation of her spirits, did not chuse to be too narrowly observed, and in answer to Mrs. Romney's friendly inquiry, replied, that she had a violent pain in her head.

After the time usually dedicated to visits of this kind was elapsed, lady Elizabeth rose from her seat, and having politely invited Miss Fanbrook to accompany Mrs. Romney to her rout in the following week, she stepped into her chariot, while her lofty husband, full of self-consequence, marched stately after her, with all the mock majesty of a Nabob.

As soon as their carriage was driven from the door, Mrs. Romney, impatient to hear the continuation of her young guest's narrative, desired her to sit down, and proceed. 'But first let me ask you, said she, how you find yourself; for I declare that I was absolutely frightened to see you change colour so suddenly.' 'It was the sight of Mr. Ropy, madam, said Miss Fanbrook, which affected me so deeply.'

'Bless me! my dear, replied Mrs. Romney, sure you are not in love with him.' 'Dear madam, said she, reddening with indignation, I hope you do not think I have any feelings for Mr. Ropy, but those of contempt. But though I detest and despise him, I have suffered only too much on his account: through my own folly indeed, added she with a sigh—However, since you are desirous of hearing my unfortunate history, I will go on——

'Mr. Beecher was now perpetually at our house, and even accompanied us in all our little parties of pleasure. It
' was

‘ was soon remarked by all the family,
 ‘ though they did not mention their ob-
 ‘ servations to me, that he was always at
 ‘ my side. His assiduities did not es-
 ‘ cape my notice, and I was flattered
 ‘ by them; for there was a great simi-
 ‘ litude in our disposition. He was par-
 ‘ ticularly fond of reading, and spent
 ‘ many hours among his books with
 ‘ great delight, while the generality of
 ‘ young men of his age were attracted
 ‘ by very different amusements. As he
 ‘ studied my inclination in every thing,
 ‘ and strove to make himself not only
 ‘ agreeable to me, but useful; he sent
 ‘ me every new book on the day of pub-
 ‘ lication, which was worth my perusal,
 ‘ and by that means gave himself an
 ‘ opportunity of conversing with me
 ‘ more particularly, by demanding my
 ‘ opinion of them. Many of our con-
 ‘ versations, therefore, were of an in-
 ‘ teresting nature; and I very soon dis-
 ‘ covered that he was possessed of a solid
 ‘ understanding, a refined taste, great
 ‘ good nature, much generosity, and the
 ‘ most delicate sensibility.

‘ As he never professed any violent
‘ inclination for the fashionable diver-
‘ sions of the age, and seemed to be ra-
‘ ther averse to the disjointed chat of a
‘ mixed company; the hours that he
‘ spent with us in a family way, gave
‘ him always the most pleasure. He
‘ frequently read the ingenious work of
‘ an entertaining author to my uncle
‘ and me, while my aunt and Miss West
‘ were abroad; for I must confess, I soon
‘ began to take so much pleasure in be-
‘ ing with him, that I often refused to go
‘ with them, to pay the many trifling
‘ visits which the majority of our sex,
‘ who are slaves to custom, think them-
‘ selves obliged to discharge with a
‘ punctilious exactness. He always ex-
‘ pressed the greatest satisfaction at find-
‘ ing me at home, though I thought he
‘ seemed rather embarrassed when we
‘ happened to be alone together, and
‘ often broke off in the midst of an inte-
‘ resting discourse upon something we
‘ had been reading of, and seemed in
‘ the greatest perplexity; though I did
‘ not at that time in the least imagine
‘ that he had any thing particular to
‘ commu-

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‘ communicate to me. I thought that he
‘ liked my company from the similarity
‘ of our tastes; and as it was on that
‘ account I preferred his, I troubled not
‘ myself to search for any other motive.

‘ The time at length came when his
‘ presence was necessary at home; and
‘ the friend who had brought him to
‘ London, in order to divert his melan-
‘ choly, now as much pressed him to re-
‘ turn back, as his affairs there seemed
‘ to make it also very proper for him to
‘ be upon the spot.

‘ I heard his departure spoken of as
‘ that of a friend whom one esteems, and
‘ whose company is very pleasing; and
‘ did not hear it therefore with uncon-
‘ cern. I became, in my turn, thought-
‘ ful; he immediately perceived the al-
‘ teration, which my looks were too ho-
‘ nest to conceal; and when we were
‘ one afternoon alone, after having open-
‘ ed and closed his mouth several times,
‘ as if he was utterly undetermined, or
‘ unable to express himself, he fixed his
‘ eyes full on me, with the most lan-
‘ guishing

‘ guishing tenderness, and with a faint,
‘ raultering voice, asked me if I was not
‘ well. After a little hesitation, which the
‘ particularity of his behaviour had oc-
‘ casioned, I answered, that I was very
‘ well, and with these words I stopped.
‘ Then, replied he, there is certainly
‘ something which lies upon your mind.
‘ You have been all this day so uncom-
‘ monly serious, that you have filled me
‘ with an anxiety which I am not able
‘ to describe ; for I have too sincere a
‘ regard for you, Miss Fanbrook, con-
‘ tinued he, to see you either not well,
‘ or not happy, without being sensibly
‘ affected.’

‘ I blushed at this direct discovery of
‘ his friendship for me ; but only repli-
‘ ed, that I was very much obliged to
‘ him.

‘ No, madam, returned he, you are
‘ under no obligation to me ; but I shall
‘ never cease to wish that it was in my
‘ power to make myself serviceable to
‘ you. You appeared always so easy
‘ and chearful, that I was in hopes you
‘ had

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‘ had nothing to disturb you ; but within
‘ these two days you have been quite
‘ otherwise ; so that I am afraid you have
‘ met with something to give you unea-
‘ siness, which, however, by being com-
‘ municated, may be perhaps alleviated,
‘ if not totally removed. Let me at
‘ least have the pleasure, added he, tak-
‘ ing me by the hand, which he tenderly
‘ pressed, to leave you happy, since I
‘ must leave you.’

‘ He closed the last words with a deep
‘ sigh, and a look more significant than
‘ any which he had uttered, by which I
‘ was thrown into the greatest confu-
‘ sion. I cast down my eyes merely be-
‘ cause I knew not where to fix them :
‘ but I did not withdraw my hand, be-
‘ cause I felt a kind of unknown, un-
‘ speakable pleasure, which I had never
‘ experienced before, in letting it remain
‘ under the pressure of his. How I looked
‘ I know not ; but I imagine that he was
‘ encouraged by the manner in which I
‘ behaved to proceed, for he pressed my
‘ hand more and more tenderly, and
‘ with redoubled earnestness intreated

‘ me to inform him what had occasion-
‘ ed so great an alteration in me.

‘ Could I but flatter myself, continu-
‘ ed he, Miss Fanbrook, that I am in the
‘ least worthy of your friendship, I
‘ should be blessed indeed: but I am
‘ obliged to leave you for some time;
‘ and who knows what may happen be-
‘ fore I can return: some happier man
‘ may take that place in your gentle
‘ bosom which I have been so long, so
‘ ardently wishing to possess myself. Oh!
‘ Miss Fanbrook, were you but sensible of
‘ what I have suffered on your account,
‘ your amiable disposition would, I am
‘ sure, incline you to afford me your
‘ pity, if I must not hope for the pos-
‘ session of your heart.

‘ I was so much pleased, and so much
‘ perplexed, madam, how to answer him
‘ properly, that I spoke not a single
‘ word: while he, conceiving hopes
‘ from my silence, continued to urge
‘ me in the most passionate terms to
‘ make a reply.

‘ Will

‘ Will you not bless me with one poor
‘ word? cried he. But I am too im-
‘ portunate—a look then shall suffice.—
‘ One look, just to inform me that I
‘ have not, by this abrupt declaration,
‘ offended past forgiveness, and I will
‘ be content.’

‘ I then began to assume a little more
‘ courage. But all this, madam, can
‘ afford no entertainment to you.’

‘ Indeed, my dear, said Mrs. Romney,
‘ you are mistaken: unless I hear every
‘ minute particular, how am I to form a
‘ judgment of your conduct? Do not,
‘ therefore, suppress any circumstance,
‘ though ever so trifling, but open your
‘ whole heart to me with the utmost
‘ freedom and sincerity.’

‘ The less you see of that heart, ma-
‘ dam, replied Sophia, the less you will
‘ be disgusted with it: but as I have
‘ promised not to conceal my faults from
‘ you, I will proceed.

‘ I answered my lover, for a lover he
‘ now indisputably was, that I was un-
‘ der the protection of a very kind uncle
‘ and aunt, and referred him to them,
‘ as they knew what was properest for
‘ me; and told him, that I should be en-
‘ tirely directed by them in every thing.’

‘ And can your uncle and aunt, re-
‘ turned he, though the best people in
‘ the world (as I know they are) can
‘ they, my lovely Sophia, ought they
‘ to have so intire an influence over you,
‘ as to bias you in the choice of a man
‘ with whom you are to be united for ever?
‘ There is no person living has an higher
‘ idea of the duty of children to their
‘ parents than I have; and no son ever
‘ behaved himself more dutifully to an
‘ excellent father than I did: but if
‘ even he had forbid me to love you, to
‘ doat on you, as I do, I could have
‘ died, but I could not have obeyed him.
‘ With the greatest pleasure, madam,
‘ continued he, will I avail myself of the
‘ kind permission you have given me,
‘ to solicit the consent of Mr. and Mrs.
‘ Besfield. But my love is too delicate

‘ to

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‘ to owe the possession of your affections
‘ to the influence of any friend or rela-
‘ tion: I would wish it to depend entire-
‘ ly on your dear self; I would be the
‘ choice of your heart, Miss Fanbrook,
‘ and can never be satisfied with myself,
‘ if I am not capable of inspiring you
‘ with the same tender inclination for
‘ me which I so strongly feel for you.’

‘ I ventured to cast my eyes towards
‘ him at the end of this speech, and saw
‘ such a passionate anxiety in his coun-
‘ tenance, that it put all my little bashful
‘ niceties to rout in a moment. The
‘ sincere regard which I had long (with-
‘ out knowing it) felt for him, was now
‘ first discovered by me. I frankly told
‘ him, that his merit had made all
‘ the impression he could desire upon
‘ my heart; and informed him also, that
‘ if both our families approved of our
‘ union, I should think myself very for-
‘ tunate in having gained his esteem.

‘ It is impossible for me, madam, to
‘ describe the pleasure which he expressed
‘ at this declaration; and indeed, he
‘ could

“ could scarcely make himself intelligible, so much was he affected with it; giving me, however, by the difficulty with which he uttered his joy, the strongest proof that his joy was sincere. Regular sentiments, drest in flowery language, flow from the lips of lying lovers, when their minds are perfectly at ease; but the true lover is generally at a loss for words to express the joy which he feels.

“ After he had given a loose to his transports for a few moments; transports which, I confess, flattered my vanity not a little, I began to reflect on my unexpected happiness; and as the mind is ever ingenious in tormenting itself, considered the interruptions it might meet with. My friends, I knew, would rejoice at such an unexceptionable offer; from them I could therefore expect no hindrance. I then recollected that my fortune was very small; and that Mr. Beecher, if ignorant of it, might probably, on being acquainted with the truth, entertain sentiments not at all to my advantage.

‘ tage. To prevent his being deceived
 ‘ in my fortune, therefore, I resolved to
 ‘ inform him directly; for I thought I
 ‘ should act very ungenerously, if I con-
 ‘ cealed my circumstances from him.
 ‘ This resolution of mine gave me so
 ‘ pensive an air, that he, who was ever
 ‘ attentive to the slightest change in my
 ‘ countenance, and fearful of displeasing,
 ‘ intreated me to tell him the cause of
 ‘ it. I complied immediately with his
 ‘ request, and honestly owned, that I did
 ‘ not think my little fortune any way
 ‘ equivalent to his estate.’

‘ Fortune, my dear Sophia, said he,
 ‘ is no more to be thought of, after a
 ‘ genteel competency is secured: that
 ‘ I have; and I shall never bestow a wish
 ‘ to increase it, but upon your account:
 ‘ if you wish for more, I shall then, in-
 ‘ deed, be inclined to wish for more too,
 ‘ because I shall ever desire to see you
 ‘ happy: but if you can be content with
 ‘ my moderate income, the abundance
 ‘ you might have had with others shall
 ‘ be made up by me, in the most ardent
 ‘ and constant affection for you. I shall

‘ endeavour, by every action of my life,
‘ to prevent your repenting of having
‘ kindly condescended to accept of me.
‘ Whatever you at present possess, Miss
‘ Fanbrook, shall always be at your own
‘ disposal, with the addition of such a
‘ settlement as you and your good uncle
‘ approve of. I have now no relation
‘ to please; but if I had, I would not
‘ acknowledge that person as one, who
‘ endeavoured to obstruct my happiness
‘ with the only woman in the world
‘ whom I can ever love.’

‘ You may be sure, madam, this ge-
‘ nerous behaviour in Mr. Beecher in-
‘ creased my regard for him, and I
‘ thought I should be wanting in gra-
‘ titude to him, if I concealed the plea-
‘ sure which it gave me. In short, I
‘ opened my heart without any reserve
‘ to him, and frankly confessed at last,
‘ that the seriousness in my looks, which
‘ had given rise to this conversation, was
‘ owing to nothing but a dread of his
‘ absence; and that as I was not sensible
‘ myself that it was love, having till
‘ now been quite a stranger to that pas-
‘ sion,

‘ sion, I had placed it to the account of
‘ friendship; but I believe, added I,
‘ with a smile, that between the two
‘ sexes friendship is closely allied to a
‘ softer passion.’

‘ This farther declaration of my sentiments in his favour (which he said
‘ were discovered in so artless, so charming a manner) made him almost wild
‘ with pleasure; nor could I bring him
‘ for some time to talk rationally. While
‘ I was endeavouring to reduce his language to common sense, my uncle
‘ came in to us, to whom my lover at
‘ once proposed himself as a relation,
‘ and offered to settle his whole fortune
‘ upon me. My uncle, who really loved
‘ me, and had a very high opinion of
‘ his young friend, was quite pleased
‘ with his generous offer, but would not
‘ have me accept of any more than what
‘ is generally thought handsome for such
‘ an estate. I entirely agreed with my
‘ uncle, and can truly say, that at that
‘ time I wished for no more than Mr.
‘ Beecher was possessed of. Such a
‘ match might have been reckoned an
‘ exceeding

‘ exceeding good one, even by those
‘ who look upon riches as the chief
‘ blessings in this world; and I did at
‘ that moment, and have ever since, be-
‘ held Mr. Beecher with the same partial
‘ eyes of affection, and have never be-
‘ stowed a single thought upon any
‘ other man.

‘ By the time all this was settled, my
‘ aunt and cousin returned home, and
‘ Mr. Beecher was now looked upon and
‘ treated as a person who was soon to be
‘ one of the family. He acquainted me
‘ of the necessity of his going down to
‘ his estate for a short time, to settle
‘ some affairs; but said, as he should
‘ look upon every moment absent from
‘ me, a moment of unhappiness, I might
‘ be sure of his return as speedily as it
‘ could be contrived.

‘ When I was left to the possession
‘ of my own thoughts, and had time to
‘ reflect upon this unexpected event, I
‘ felt the most lively transports of joy,
‘ at being so sincerely beloved by a man
‘ so every way deserving, and whom I
‘ would

‘ would have myself chosen from among
‘ all his sex, had I been permitted to do
‘ so. Nor was my having so advantage-
‘ ous an offer before my cousin Juliet,
‘ the least part of my delight: though
‘ I can with the strictest truth declare,
‘ that the advantageousness of it was
‘ but a secondary consideration. I really
‘ loved Mr. Beecher; and his vigilant
‘ assiduity, his continual attention, and
‘ his respectful tenderness, all united to
‘ increase my affection for him.

‘ Before he took leave of me to go
‘ into the country, he left full directi-
‘ ons with our lawyers to finish the writ-
‘ ings with all possible expedition, and
‘ intreated my aunt and cousin to hasten
‘ me, and to assist in making all neces-
‘ sary preparations for our marriage
‘ against his return.

‘ When the day of his departure ar-
‘ rived, he was so much affected at leav-
‘ ing me, though as he thought but for
‘ so short a time, that he appeared like
‘ a man abandoned to despair. He
‘ pressed me to his bosom with such
‘ anxious

‘ anxious fondness, that one would have
‘ thought he foresaw that he was then
‘ taking his last adieu. To my eternal
‘ shame I speak it, alas, it was so. But
‘ as I was totally unworthy of him,
‘ I should have, in marrying him, acted
‘ with the greatest injustice.’

Here she burst into so violent a passion of tears, that they prevented her from continuing her narration for some time ; and it was not till after Mrs. Romney had talked to her of several indifferent things, to give a turn to her spirits, that she was able to pursue it.

‘ The very next day, continued Miss
‘ Fanbrook, after Mr. Beecher left me,
‘ my aunt insisted upon my going with
‘ my cousin to a ball, which was given
‘ by one of the East Indians, who had
‘ so lately acquired such immense fortunes in that part of the world. In
‘ vain did I plead want of inclination,
‘ lowness of spirits, nay sickness itself, to
‘ excuse me. She told me I was not
‘ ill enough to be confined to the house,
‘ and added, that company would divert
‘ and

‘ and do me good. I complied merely
‘ to oblige her, and accompanied Juliet,
‘ who was dressed in all the pride of
‘ beauty in hopes of conquest.

‘ The entertainment was splendid, the
‘ company genteel, and every woman in
‘ the room but myself was all life and
‘ gaiety. As my thoughts were entirely
‘ engrossed by my absent lover, I re-
‘ garded not the little civilities which
‘ were paid to me; but though I was
‘ inattentive to those paid to myself, I
‘ was not so to those which my cousin
‘ received. She never looked so hand-
‘ some in my opinion, and the whole
‘ room seemed to be of my mind. She
‘ was flattered with all the homage that
‘ a lovely young girl could expect from
‘ a crowd of men who had no other
‘ view than the most luxurious gratifi-
‘ cation of their passions. And shall I
‘ own to you, madam, that, notwith-
‘ standing my thoughts were so taken up
‘ with the happiness which I was destin-
‘ ed to enjoy, with a man, according to
‘ all outward appearance, infinitely su-
‘ perior, except in fortune, to every man

‘ in

‘ in the place, I reflected, on surveying
‘ the young married women present,
‘ that I could never hope with him to
‘ arrive at so much splendor? This ri-
‘ diculous reflection, for nothing surely
‘ can be more truly ridiculous than to
‘ prefer outward show to inward hap-
‘ piness, made me sigh a little, so little
‘ however, that I hardly gave myself
‘ leave to perceive it. I then began to
‘ think, that as I saw Juliet so apparent-
‘ ly the object of every body’s observa-
‘ tion, it was possible that she might
‘ become the choice of a man in far
‘ more affluent circumstances than Mr.
‘ Beecher, and might have it in her
‘ power vastly to outshine me in my
‘ humble station. This was another
‘ foolish thought which came across
‘ me, and I think presaged what was to
‘ happen.

‘ We did not quit this intoxicating
‘ place till the next morning, when my
‘ aunt conducted us home, full of very
‘ different sentiments. Juliet’s little head
‘ was almost giddy with the incense that
‘ had been paid to her charms; and mine
‘ was

‘ was full of envy, jealousy, and discontent.

‘ The next day, as we were taking
‘ our tea in the afternoon, the postman
‘ brought me a letter from Mr. Beecher,
‘ full of the tenderest complaints of absence, the strongest protestations of an
‘ everlasting passion, and the pleasing
‘ account of the preparations he was
‘ making for my reception in the country. This letter awakened for a while
‘ all my tender sentiments in his favour,
‘ and I was enjoying all the satisfaction
‘ which the strong assurances of his extreme fondness for me occasioned, when
‘ a loud rap at the door was followed by
‘ the entrance of one of the gentlemen
‘ who we had seen the preceding evening at the ball, and who was not unknown to my uncle and aunt. He
‘ was not one of the most distinguished
‘ in that company for his fortune, but
‘ had acquired a very genteel sufficiency,
‘ and was younger and more agreeable
‘ than the majority of them.

‘ After

‘ After having partaken of our little
‘ family refreshments ; and after having
‘ said a thousand gallantries to my cousin
‘ and me (usual on such occasions) but
‘ particularly to Juliet, he desired to
‘ speak with my uncle alone, upon
‘ which he went into my uncle’s library ;
‘ and after he had continued there near
‘ half an hour, they both returned to us
‘ with the most chearful countenances to
‘ be imagined.

‘ My uncle, looking at my cousin,
‘ said to her, ‘ Here is a gentleman, Miss
‘ West, who comes, commissioned from
‘ his friend, to make you very hand-
‘ some proposals, if your inclinations are
‘ not already engaged. I have assured
‘ him that I believe you are at liberty ;
‘ however, my dear, marriage is a very
‘ serious affair ; it is an engagement for
‘ life, from which there is no retreat to
‘ be made ; let me therefore desire you
‘ to be perfectly certain whether your
‘ heart is free before you accept of this
‘ very advantageous offer.

‘ Juliet

‘ Juliet blushed extremely, and answered in a faint voice, that she had never yet entertained any thoughts of marriage; and that she should in marriage, and in every thing else, be directed by him and her aunt.

‘ You will then, madam, said the young gentleman, make my friend Mr. Ropy the happiest man in the universe, for it is he, who you must remember, took such particular notice of you; though I believe no-body who beheld you, was insensible of your beauty.’ This gallant speech was followed by a more minute detail of the ample possessions and luxurious taste of Mr. Ropy (who is the individual gentleman just gone from us) of the vast settlement he proposed to make upon my cousin, of the large quantity of magnificent jewels she would be mistress of, together with a numerous train of servants, always ready to obey her nod; an elegant house in Grosvenor-square, and a fine seat on his newly purchased estate in the country.

‘ All this gave the highest satisfac-
‘ tion to every person in the room but
‘ me, who felt the most tormenting
‘ pangs of envy, stinging me more than
‘ a thousand vipers. I became absolute-
‘ ly frantic, at the thoughts of the gran-
‘ deur which my cousin was going to
‘ enjoy, and heard the enumeration of
‘ all the fine things which were to be
‘ lavished on her, with my eyes fixed,
‘ and my mouth half open, while my
‘ heart died within me, when I reflected
‘ on the difference between her lot and
‘ mine. She, said I to myself, will blaze
‘ in jewels the finest figure at the most
‘ brilliant assemblies in town, while I
‘ must be contented to sit down, neat
‘ and clean indeed, and with all the ne-
‘ cessaries of life in plenty, but in a
‘ country village, with only my husband,
‘ and the few neighbours which a little
‘ remote spot may afford us.

‘ These mortifying reflections kept me
‘ awake all night; I never closed my
‘ eyes; in vain did I attribute my un-
‘ easiness to the excess of pride, vanity,
‘ and folly, and charged myself with be-
‘ ing

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ing inexcusably ungrateful to the most
generous of his sex, who in giving me
his fortune and his heart, had given
me his all, as valuable to him, as if he
had had worlds to bestow. In short,
I looked upon myself as unworthy of
him in the highest degree; and from
conceiving but a momentary reflexion,
that I should not be happy in the way
of life he could place me in, began to
imagine that it was only a conscious-
ness of my not deserving him, which
made me wish to avoid connections
with him. And indeed it is most cer-
tain, that with these abominable sen-
timents, I should have done him an
irreparable injury in accepting of him
in the midst of them. Abominable I
must call them, for surely they deserve
no softer term. His amiable person;
his generous esteem; his tender love;
and the torture I knew he would feel,
when he heard of this amazing altera-
tion in me with regard to him, pre-
sented themselves to my imagination
in the strongest colours. I saw him at
my feet, in all the horror of despair;
I heard his melting complaints, and

‘ wound up myself to such a pitch, by
‘ imaging his distressful situation, that
‘ I determined to conquer my most ridi-
‘ culous folly, and unaccountable pride;
‘ and in short to be his alone.

‘ To strengthen myself in this resolu-
‘ tion, I rose and read his letter over and
‘ over again; and every time I read it,
‘ found fresh reasons to be charmed with
‘ all his fond expressions in my favour,
‘ and his repeated wishes for my perpe-
‘ tual felicity. This fortified me a little,
‘ and I came down to breakfast, though
‘ pale and faint with the struggles I had
‘ undergone, absolutely determined to
‘ be, or appear to be, content with my
‘ fate at all events.

‘ The first object which struck my
‘ eyes was Miss West, and I was much
‘ hurt by her appearance, and provoked
‘ with her for having so many attrac-
‘ tions. She was dressed ready to re-
‘ ceive her lover, who was expected to
‘ make her a visit. There was such an
‘ elegant negligence in the disposition of
‘ her ornaments, such a modest cheer-
‘ fulness

'fulness in her aspect, and such a spi-
 'rited glow of health in her counte-
 'nance, that I could hardly bear to look
 'at her. But when, with the rest of
 'the family, I ran to the window, upon
 'the noise which the splendid parade of
 'this visit made in the street, my heart
 'absolutely sickened at the approach of
 'the gilded chariot, and the long-tailed
 'beautiful Arabian horses which drew
 'it. It sickened then, but I was almost
 'ready to die, when, after about an
 'hour's tête-a tête, Juliet entered the
 'room in which my aunt and I were
 'sitting, with Mr. Ropy's picture, which
 'he had just given her for a bracelet,
 'with such a chain of valuable diamonds
 'to bind it to her arm, as few private
 'gentlemen could purchase. I staid
 'not to hear her account of her lover,
 'that would have been too much. I
 'went up to my chamber, and after a
 'flood of tears, which I believe I shed
 'to atone in some measure for my most
 'monstrous weakness, came to the reso-
 'lution of giving up Beecher. I now,
 'for the first time in my life, was cer-
 'tain that I could not be happy in a

‘ private station, while my cousin had
‘ so eminently the superiority over me ;
‘ and flattered myself, that when she
‘ was settled, and out of my way, I
‘ might perhaps engage some man, if
‘ not so affluent as Mr. Ropy, at least
‘ much more so than my poor Beecher,
‘ whom I still persuaded myself most
‘ truly, that I should ruin by marrying
‘ him.

‘ When I was summoned to dinner
‘ (for my uneasy sensations had kept
‘ me from appearing till then) both my
‘ aunt and my uncle took notice of my
‘ melancholy air, my pale complexion,
‘ and my swelled eyes; and hastily de-
‘ manded the occasion of the sorrowful
‘ appearance which I made. I made no
‘ reply for a long time, but by sighs and
‘ tears, and by refusing to taste a morsel
‘ of any thing upon the table: but when
‘ the cloth was removed, as they in-
‘ sisted upon knowing what could have
‘ thrown me into this condition, the
‘ cause of it at once burst from my lips.
‘ I declared that I could never be happy
‘ with Mr. Beecher; that I could not,
‘ though

‘ though I had the highest regard for
 ‘ him, bring myself to be his wife ; and
 ‘ that I wished my uncle would break
 ‘ off the match in the best manner he
 ‘ could. It grieves me to death, sir,
 ‘ said I, to have him made uneasy on
 ‘ my account ; but yet notwithstanding,
 ‘ let what will be the consequence, I
 ‘ must persist in refusing him for a
 ‘ husband.

‘ My uncle and aunt were to the last
 ‘ degree astonished and distressed at
 ‘ hearing me talk in this manner, and
 ‘ asked me over and over if I had lost
 ‘ my senses. They endeavoured, by all
 ‘ the mildest methods, by the kindest
 ‘ persuasions, and the justest reasoning,
 ‘ to convince me of the injury I was do-
 ‘ ing, both to myself and the best crea-
 ‘ ture in the world, by acting so madly.
 ‘ They even desired to see his letter,
 ‘ and my uncle read it over in the most
 ‘ pathetic manner, hoping thereby to
 ‘ awaken my tenderness, and revive my
 ‘ affection for the most amiable of men.
 ‘ And, indeed, I felt myself more than
 ‘ once relapse into my former softness

‘ and sensibility. As my feelings did
‘ not escape their observation, for they
‘ watched every motion of my coun-
‘ tenance, they begged me to go up-
‘ stairs, and answer it in the kindest
‘ terms, telling me that he would be
‘ quite alarmed at my silence. I took
‘ the letter with a trembling hand, and
‘ all wretched and irresolute as I was,
‘ sat down to my desk to write. Scarce
‘ had I sat down when Juliet, entirely
‘ ignorant of the motive for my strange
‘ behaviour, and thinking to divert me,
‘ came very innocently into my room,
‘ and informed me, that while I was
‘ above in the morning, she and her
‘ aunt had been contriving cloaths for
‘ her marriage, and said she wanted to
‘ know if I approved of her fancy. Be-
‘ fore I could return an answer, she ran
‘ on with such a list of white and silver,
‘ silver and gold, and gold and silver
‘ with colours, with points, and lace,
‘ and jewels, that she entirely stunned
‘ me. I sat quite absorbed in the idea
‘ of her splendor, and totally lost to my
‘ own happiness. At length, finding I
‘ paid no attention to her, she went
‘ away,

away, and the indignation with which
 I reflected on my own conduct got
 the better of all my returning affec-
 tion. I found myself more and more
 unworthy of Beecher, and went to my
 uncle. I intreated him, with the
 greatest earnestness, to write to my
 lover, and to tell him that I felt
 myself utterly incapable of making
 him happy; and that I begged he
 would bestow no farther thought on
 a person who, with regard to him,
 was totally changed. In vain did my
 uncle demand the cause of this change:
 in vain did he tell me that he was
 sure Beecher had a real affection for
 me, and was so good-natured a man,
 that he would give up any points he
 had proposed, if upon reflection they
 appeared disagreeable to me. I never
 had an higher opinion of Mr. Beecher,
 Sir, said I, than I have at this present
 moment; there is no part of his con-
 duct which I wish to be altered; but
 I never, never, can be united to him.
 Then, replied my uncle, I never will
 tell him so. You are quite distracted,
 child, at present, but to-morrow I hope

‘ to see you restored to your senses.’ At
‘ the end of this speech he left me to
‘ my aunt, who used the most winning
‘ arguments she could think of to bring
‘ me to reason; but to no purpose. For
‘ she, far from imagining I could be so
‘ very weak as to refuse so good a match
‘ only because my cousin’s was so great
‘ in point of fortune, very innocently
‘ mixed with her care for my happiness,
‘ the joy she felt also at being so near
‘ seeing Juliet so well disposed of; and
‘ in so doing added new stings to those
‘ already in my bosom, which envy had
‘ planted there. I left her in sullen
‘ silence, and retired to my chamber,
‘ where I passed the night as unquietly as
‘ I had passed the preceding one. I was
‘ only more and more determined every
‘ moment to give up my lover.

‘ When I came into my aunt’s dressing-room in the morning, my uncle
‘ received me with the greatest kindness;
‘ but gently reprimanded me for
‘ the strange fickleness of disposition
‘ which I had discovered the day before,
‘ and asked me if I had answered Mr.

‘ Beecher’s letter, and if he might see
 ‘ what I had written. Before I could
 ‘ think of collecting my scattered
 ‘ thoughts enough to answer in the
 ‘ manner I intended, another letter was
 ‘ brought to me from the same hand,
 ‘ wherein, after a profusion of tender
 ‘ complaints of being obliged to go still
 ‘ farther from me, he informed me
 ‘ that the person who had the manage-
 ‘ ment of his affairs, had been for some
 ‘ days on a visit to his father, fifty miles
 ‘ distant from his estate; that he fell ill
 ‘ there, and was given over; and that
 ‘ his father had sent for him in a hurry,
 ‘ as he wished to speak with him before
 ‘ he died. This letter was dispatched
 ‘ a few hours after that which I had
 ‘ first received, and contained little more
 ‘ than what I have mentioned, but a
 ‘ direction where to write to him, and
 ‘ the most earnest intreaties for an an-
 ‘ swer, as that, he said, could alone sup-
 ‘ port him to bear my absence.

‘ This letter, which I also gave my
 ‘ uncle to read, occasioned him to re-
 ‘ new his importunities, nay, even to add

‘ his commands to write immediately ;
‘ but I continued a long while irresolute.
‘ At last, after a violent struggle, I took
‘ up my pen, and having asked my
‘ lover’s pardon for so readily agreeing
‘ to proposals which, though they did
‘ me a great deal of honour, I could
‘ not accept ; and having at the same
‘ time owned myself too capricious to
‘ deserve him, I intreated him to give
‘ himself no farther trouble about one
‘ so unworthy of him, and begged he
‘ would endeavour to forget that we
‘ had ever been acquainted.

‘ I shewed this answer to my lover’s
‘ letters to my uncle, which threw him,
‘ for the first time, into an immoderate
‘ passion with me. I took that oppor-
‘ tunity to return to my chamber, from
‘ whence I heard my uncle very loud
‘ against me, and my aunt trying to
‘ compose his temper, which she at
‘ length effected by telling him that
‘ there might possibly be some reason
‘ for my sudden disgust, which I could
‘ not decently divulge ; and that, as I
‘ shewed so much uneasiness about it,

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‘ it was better to let me act as I thought
‘ proper, in an affair wherein my whole
‘ happiness was at stake. He acqui-
‘ esced, and folded up my letter, hav-
‘ ing first added a line by way of excul-
‘ pating himself, assuring Mr. Beecher
‘ that he was entirely ignorant of the
‘ motives which urged me to act in
‘ this manner, and that he had done
‘ every thing in his power to prevail on
‘ me to act otherwise. This postscript
‘ he read aloud to my aunt, and when
‘ I heard him order the servant to carry
‘ the letter to the post-house, the dis-
‘ tracted situation of my mind is not to
‘ be described.

‘ The continual agitation of my spi-
‘ rits soon impaired my health, and a
‘ violent fever seized me. The phy-
‘ cians who attended me, declared that
‘ my life was in danger. I was deliri-
‘ ous during almost the whole time, and
‘ after I had been confined a couple of
‘ days to my bed, the small pox ap-
‘ peared. They endeavoured, with
‘ much caution, to conceal this mor-
‘ tifying event from me, as they were
‘ assured

‘ assured by the physicians, that death
‘ would be the consequence of my de-
‘ jection. But, in spite of all their cau-
‘ tion, I soon found out my disorder,
‘ and at the discovery of it gave way,
‘ as they were justly afraid I would, to
‘ despair, which affected them the more
‘ as they then had no hopes of my re-
‘ covery.

‘ When this loathsome distemper
‘ first shewed itself, I returned to my
‘ senses, and then the idea of Beecher
‘ perpetually disturbed my imagination.
‘ Though I still determined never to
‘ see him again, I wished, however, to
‘ know how he bore the loss of me.
‘ I ventured one day, as my aunt sat
‘ by my bed-side, to ask her, if my
‘ uncle had sent that letter, as if my
‘ illness had made me forget his dis-
‘ patching it. She replied, that Mr.
‘ Beecher came post to London upon
‘ the receipt of it, and had been almost
‘ continually at the house, like a dis-
‘ tracted man, both on account of that
‘ letter, and of my illness; that he had
‘ begged to see me in the most earnest
‘ manner;

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‘ manner; but that they had hitherto
‘ refused him, for fear the sight of him
‘ might affect me too much. In short,
‘ my aunt described my lover’s tender-
‘ ness and disquietude in so moving a
‘ manner, that I burst into tears, and if
‘ I had had any other distemper than the
‘ small-pox, I would have that moment
‘ received him again with transport:
‘ but when I reflected that I was no
‘ longer the person whom he had ad-
‘ mired; and that even the few attrac-
‘ tions I had were entirely destroyed, I
‘ could not bear the thoughts of giving
‘ myself to him in such cruel circum-
‘ stances, especially after having treated
‘ him in so unhandsome a manner, tho’
‘ neither he nor any of my family were
‘ acquainted with the ridiculous motives
‘ which influenced my conduct.

‘ I knew not, madam, continued Miss
‘ Fanbrook, with a deep sigh, whether
‘ this small sentiment of real and disin-
‘ terested regard for my amiable Beecher,
‘ at a time when not the least shadow of
‘ a hope of ever being in a condition
‘ to make my fortune with any other
‘ man

‘ man remained, will atone, even in the
‘ slightest degree, for my former treat-
‘ ment of him. But I do most sincerely
‘ assure you, it was that regard which
‘ prompted me to tell my aunt, that I
‘ was more than ever resolved not to see
‘ him again, and that I should die in-
‘ stantly, if they brought him before
‘ me. With a heart torn almost to
‘ pieces with a variety of conflicting
‘ passions, I added, Let me beg you,
‘ madam, earnestly beg you, to say
‘ every thing in your power to comfort
‘ him, and to persuade him to return,
‘ and look out for a wife more deserv-
‘ ing of him. I could say no more ;
‘ my strength forsook me ; I sunk down
‘ on my pillow, and I seemed to be in the
‘ arms of death.

‘ For some days I remained in this
‘ doubtful state ; the small-pox went in,
‘ and I was quite given over. How-
‘ ever, my youth and the vigour of my
‘ constitution got the better of my dis-
‘ temper, and I recovered when every
‘ body expected that it would have
‘ been fatal. As I had doomed myself
‘ to

‘ to an obscure retirement, from the first
 ‘ moment I was acquainted with my
 ‘ disorder, I bore the frightful alteration
 ‘ in my person with a surprizing fortitude; for horrid, I believe, every person must appear when first risen from
 ‘ the small-pox, though not so full as I
 ‘ was: but I thought little about my
 ‘ outward form at that time; my mind
 ‘ was wholly taken up with reflections
 ‘ on Beecher. I longed to know what
 ‘ he thought of me, and what would
 ‘ become of him when he heard my
 ‘ final determination. I longed to know,
 ‘ but I dreaded to ask. My aunt, as
 ‘ she afterwards told me, endeavoured
 ‘ to divert my attention to other things,
 ‘ lest what she had to communicate
 ‘ might retard my recovery. My disposition, though it has not injured my
 ‘ face so much as we then imagined it
 ‘ would, was of that sort which makes
 ‘ the slowest advances to a crisis; and
 ‘ as the uneasiness of my mind did not
 ‘ contribute to forward them, my return
 ‘ to health was so doubtful and lingering, that near six weeks passed before
 ‘ I was able to bear any kind of conversation,

‘ versation, or before I began to take
‘ much notice of my aunt or my cousin;
‘ for the latter, who had had the small-
‘ pox when she was an infant, now and
‘ then, I observed, came into the room.

‘ In a few days I took notice that
‘ my cousin was hardly out of my room
‘ from morning to night, and thought I
‘ perceived strong marks of discontent
‘ in her face, and in that of my aunt,
‘ but more especially in my aunt’s.
‘ Fearful lest any accident should have
‘ happened to my poor Beecher, whom
‘ I still loved, strange as it may seem to
‘ you, madam, I ventured one day to
‘ ask my aunt, when we were alone, if
‘ she knew any thing of him. She an-
‘ swered me, but very carelessly I
‘ thought, that he was obliged to go
‘ into the country, from whence he had
‘ wrote to my uncle, to enquire after
‘ my health, and had mentioned a
‘ speedy return; but that since he had
‘ been taken very ill, and that they had
‘ only heard once from his friend Mr.
‘ Ransom (the gentleman who brought
‘ him to our house) that he was on the
‘ mend-

‘ mending hand. You, Sophia, continued she, have lost a very good match, through your own folly; but poor Juliet, she has met with a disappointment which, indeed, she has not deserved.

‘ I sighed heavily at my aunt’s reprimand, but more at Beecher’s illness, of which I was too much afraid I had been the cause. I sighed, but made no reply. What are you grown, said my aunt, so indifferent to every thing, that you care no more for your friends than you do for yourself? I started at this reproof, delivered with an unusual sharpness; for my aunt was of a mild disposition, and reflected, indeed, only on what she had said relating to my lover. I did not so much as remember that she had mentioned my cousin. She thus went on: Mr. Ropy has behaved in a very dishonourable manner to her: after a few visits, and a number of rich presents, he left off coming or sending all at once. Alarmed at this behaviour, after having waited a proper time, we sent enquiries after his health, and finding that he had
‘ neither

‘ neither been ill nor out of town, we
‘ knew not what to think of it. One
‘ morning, about a fortnight ago, the
‘ same gentleman who had first menti-
‘ oned him here, came and desired to
‘ speak with your uncle and myself.
‘ After a number of apologies for be-
‘ ing obliged to deliver such a disagree-
‘ able piece of intelligence, he told us,
‘ that Mr. Ropy had intreated him to
‘ let us know, that though he had a great
‘ regard for Miss West, he thought, on
‘ farther consideration, that the great dis-
‘ parity in their ages might prove a source
‘ of perpetual disquietude to them both ;
‘ that he deemed it therefore prudent to
‘ break off the match, before matters
‘ were carried too far ; that he wished
‘ the young lady a more suitable alli-
‘ ance, and begged her to accept of
‘ what had been presented to her. You
‘ may be sure, continued my aunt, that
‘ both your uncle and I expressed the
‘ greatest surprize and resentment at
‘ such behaviour, and absolutely refused
‘ the slightest trifle which had been pre-
‘ sented by a man capable of acting in
‘ so scandalous a manner. We there-
‘ fore

‘ fore returned them all by his friend,
 ‘ and soon afterwards heard, that he ac-
 ‘ cidentally fell in the way of lady Eli-
 ‘ zabeth G — — , who made him several
 ‘ advances, which, coming from a wo-
 ‘ man of quality, he accepted, as he
 ‘ wanted nothing but a certain rank in
 ‘ life, which with all his riches he could
 ‘ not purchase so properly for his heirs,
 ‘ as by marrying into a family already
 ‘ ennobled, and which, by procuring a
 ‘ patent, could easily be made to de-
 ‘ scend to his son, if he should have one,
 ‘ as this lady had no brothers ; for her
 ‘ family, though not affluent, was very
 ‘ antient.

‘ At this detail of my aunt’s I looked
 ‘ astonished, and so much had I, during
 ‘ my sickness, repented of my folly, and
 ‘ the miserable motives by which I was
 ‘ influenced ; so much also was I de-
 ‘ pressed by my own indisposition, and
 ‘ my concern for that of my dear
 ‘ Beecher, that I can truly say I did not
 ‘ feel as I should have done before I
 ‘ was taken ill. I therefore joined with
 ‘ my aunt in expressing my sorrow at
 ‘ Juliet’s

‘ Juliet’s disappointment, who, as she
‘ was no longer my rival, was now my
‘ cousin again. As for herself, she
‘ shewed mighty little concern about
‘ it, and declared she had only agreed
‘ to marry Mr. Ropy in compliance
‘ with Mr. and Mrs. Besfield’s inclina-
‘ tions. She declared likewise, that he
‘ was not a sort of man for whom any
‘ woman could easily beak her heart;
‘ and that her confinement to the house
‘ was the most disagreeable part of the
‘ affair to her. My aunt too was great-
‘ ly vexed that the nature of my disorder rendered Juliet’s confinement so
‘ necessary, because she thought it better
‘ for her to appear in public as before,
‘ in order to silence any reproach that
‘ might be spread to her disadvantage,
‘ on Mr. Ropy’s declining his visits to
‘ her.

‘ My aunt having heard that Mr.
‘ Ropy and his new-married lady were
‘ to be in the stage-box at Drury-Lane,
‘ took care to make a very polite party
‘ among her acquaintance, and carried
‘ Juliet to the same house, to let the
‘ town

‘ town see that they were no way af-
‘ fected by the ungentle behaviour of
‘ the capricious East Indian. And this
‘ was a step extremely judicious, for
‘ almost every body, who perceived the
‘ unconcern and ease with which Mrs.
‘ Besfield and Miss West behaved, con-
‘ cluded that things had not been carried
‘ so far as rumour had given out; or
‘ that if there was any fault, it was on
‘ the side of Mr. Ropy.

‘ The physicians now thought it pro-
‘ per that I should go out of town for
‘ the air, and as I abhorred company, I
‘ very readily agreed to that motion.
‘ My aunt took lodgings for me at the
‘ house of a person at Kensington, whom
‘ she had long known, and who had
‘ formerly lived very genteely, but by
‘ a series of misfortunes was reduced to
‘ that dependent way of life. My aunt
‘ was also so kind as to spare her own
‘ servant, who was a prudent, sedate
‘ woman, to wait on me. Before I
‘ went, I found an opportunity to ask
‘ if they knew how Beecher did; and
‘ my aunt told me that my uncle had
‘ wrote

‘ wrote again to him, but had received
‘ no answer to his letter, only from Mr.
‘ Ransom, who had informed him that
‘ Mr. Beecher was very well.

‘ This appeared rather odd to all the
‘ family, though Beecher’s silence was
‘ in some measure accounted for by my
‘ abrupt refusal of him. For my part, I
‘ placed it all to my own account; yet,
‘ though I had appeared in so capricious
‘ a light to him, I thought that the great
‘ regard he had professed for me, and
‘ the dangerous situation I had been in,
‘ demanded another sort of behaviour.
‘ Was this silence, my dear madam,
‘ consistent with that ardent passion with
‘ which he seemed to be, and certainly
‘ was, inspired, before my folly drove
‘ him from me? Would a man, who
‘ loved me really with so much ardor,
‘ have left me without seeing me,
‘ without hearing from myself, or en-
‘ deavouring to be made acquainted
‘ with the reasons for my strange con-
‘ duct? However, as I have amply
‘ deserved his neglect, I ought not to
‘ complain; but I shall never recover
‘ from

‘ from the wound it has given to my
‘ peace,

‘ The time we stayed at Kensington
‘ was truly the most wretched part of
‘ my life; nor can I image a more
‘ dreary situation than that in which I
‘ felt myself in a little country lodging,
‘ entirely among strangers, separated
‘ from all my friends and relations,
‘ with my health far from being re-
‘ established, and my mind tormented
‘ with its own reflections. I have, indeed,
‘ often since wondered that my brain
‘ was not distracted. And though to a
‘ sound mind no calamity appears more
‘ severe than the loss of reason, I could
‘ have almost at that time have parted
‘ with mine with pleasure, to be free
‘ from the upbraidings of my conscience.
‘ At last I sunk into a profound melan-
‘ choly, which has ever since, though in
‘ a less degree, oppressed me, and six
‘ months are now past from the day on
‘ which I was seized with the small-
‘ pox.

‘ When I returned to town, it was found
‘ that my spirits were not mended, tho’
‘ my health was improved by the coun-
‘ try air. The remaining redness in my
‘ face, together with my dislike to all
‘ kind of company, made me averse to
‘ going abroad; I spent my time there-
‘ fore chiefly in reading, and weeping
‘ over the books which Mr. Beecher had
‘ presented to me. My aunt Greville,
‘ who is of a very chearful temper, and
‘ who has never met with any thing to
‘ make her otherwise, often came to see
‘ me, and endeavoured to rouse me
‘ from my lethargy, as she called it,
‘ and kindly invited me to pass some
‘ time with her at Windsor. I agreed
‘ to her request with reluctance, and
‘ desired afterwards to be excused, fear-
‘ ing that she would overpower me
‘ with her vivacity; but when my aunt
‘ Besfield was determined to go to
‘ Southampton, and to take Miss West
‘ and myself with her, I resolved im-
‘ mediately to accept of Mrs. Greville’s
‘ offer, as I could not bear the thoughts
‘ of going to any public place; and as
‘ I un-

‘ I understood that my aunt was not
‘ going from home, I imagined it was
‘ not necessary to write again to her.

‘ Thus, madam, has my irresolution,
‘ for once in my life, given me pleasure,
‘ as it has brought me acquainted with
‘ you, who, without a compliment, ap-
‘ pear to me possessed of all the requi-
‘ sites which constitute an amiable, a
‘ desirable friend; a most valuable cha-
‘ racter, which alone can recompense
‘ me for the loss which I have brought
‘ upon myself; for the loss of my once
‘ esteemed, once beloved Beecher.’

‘ And still beloved, my dear Miss
‘ Fanbrook, said Mrs. Romney (with a
‘ graceful bow, for the pleasure she ex-
‘ pressed in her friendship). I am much
‘ obliged to you for the confidence you
‘ have placed in me, and do not doubt
‘ but that I may have it in my power to
‘ be of service to you; and in order to
‘ begin to be so, I must tell you, my
‘ dear Sophia, that though vanity is, I
‘ believe, the ruling passion in too many
‘ women, I think you have carried it

‘ farther than any I ever met with ; but
‘ I hope and trust that you are cured of
‘ it for life. Nothing therefore remains
‘ for us but to endeavour, by all proper
‘ methods, to regain Mr. Beecher, who,
‘ I dare say, continued she, with a smile,
‘ is not irrecoverably lost.’

‘ Oh, dear madam, said Miss Fan-
‘ brook, I cannot think of taking any
‘ steps, after what I have done, and with
‘ a person so changed’——

‘ Your person, my dear, said Mrs.
‘ Romney, is very well still ; your com-
‘ plexion, indeed, has been a little hurt
‘ by your distemper, but time will re-
‘ store that ; and as there is no alteration
‘ in your features, you will not be the
‘ worse for it by and bye.’

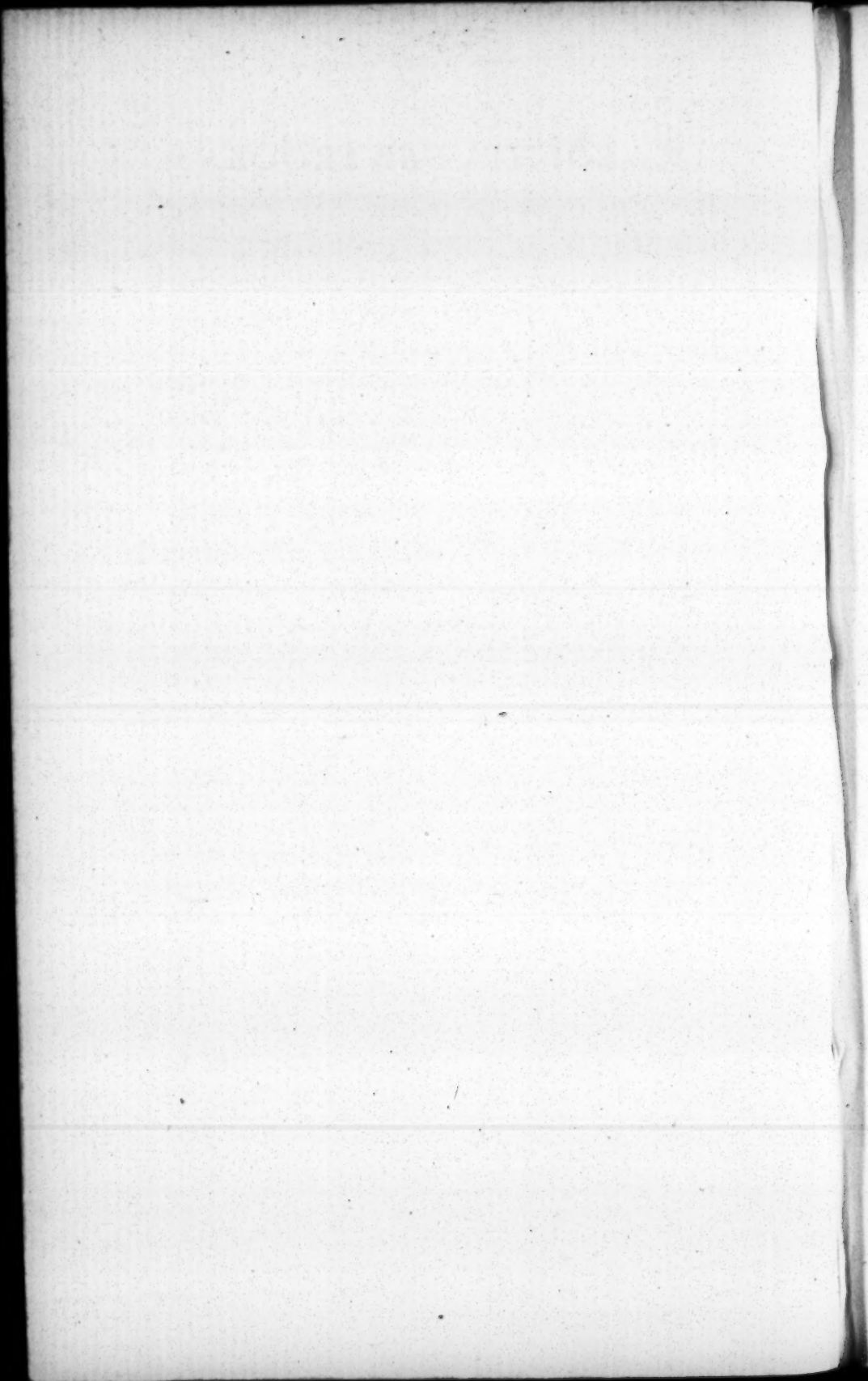
The entrance of Mrs. Greville and
her son, who had accompanied her home,
in order to see his cousin, interrupted
their conversation upon this interesting
topic ; and Mrs. Greville, after having
thanked Mrs. Romney for receiving her
niece in so hospitable a manner, told her
she

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she was come to release her from her charge. Mrs. Romney declaring how agreeable the company of her niece had been to her, replied, that she would not part with her, without a promise that she would spend almost as much time with her as if she was still under the same roof.

‘ Miss Sophia, said young Greville,
‘ will not, I fancy, be long with either
‘ of us; for I met a gentleman upon the
‘ road hither who has just left her, or is
‘ in pursuit of her.’

The End of the First Book.



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK.
B O O K II.

SOPHY's face was covered with blushes at this inference of her cousin's, for she concluded that Beecher was the man he hinted at, as she had seen him upon the Terrace.

Mrs. Romney immediately said to him, ' And pray, sir, why did not you
' stop and ask this gentleman a few
E 4 ' ques-

‘ questions, as where he came from, and
‘ whither he was going?’

‘ No, madam, said Mr. Greville, I
‘ could not properly take the liberty, as
‘ I never saw him but once at Mr.
‘ Besfield’s: we only seemed just to re-
‘ collect each other; and besides, he
‘ rode so hastily by me, that I must
‘ have found great difficulty in stopping
‘ him’.

This reply changed Miss Fanbrook’s complexion from a rosy red to a death-like pale, upon which her friendly observer, Mrs. Romney, instantly gave a new turn to the conversation, but would not part with her till after supper.

Miss Fanbrook scarce closed her eyes that night in her new lodging; and the next day, when her aunt was engaged with some of her most intimate neighbours, ran to Mrs. Romney, who told her she had made all possible enquiries after Beecher, but could hear nothing farther of him, than that he had passed
one

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one night only at Windsor, and was returned to London.

Sophia thanked her with a sigh, and only replied, 'Wherever he goes, may all happiness forever attend him!'

Her good-natured friend did every thing in her power to amuse and entertain her, but nothing could remove her melancholy. She tried to appear cheerful when she was in company, but always chose to see as few persons as possible; and Mrs. Greville, finding that she was almost always with Mrs. Romney, accepted, at her niece's request, the offer of joining a very agreeable party who were going to Brighthelmstone. She would fain have persuaded Sophy to have accompanied her, but she could not succeed; no arguments nor intreaties could draw her from her new friend.

About a week after Mrs. Greville had left Windsor, she wrote a letter to Miss Fanbrook, wherein there was this particular piece of intelligence: 'When I

‘ first came down here, I saw Mr.
‘ Beecher, who enquired after your
‘ health, and is since gone to France.’

When she had read this paragraph, the letter dropped from her trembling hand, unable to support it. She cried out to Mrs. Romney, ‘ How strange do
‘ I, by my every action, contribute to
‘ make myself wretched? Had I gone
‘ with Mrs. Greville, I should have seen
‘ him, once more seen him: but to what
‘ purpose? He is now cured, undoubt-
‘ edly, of an inclination which only
‘ served to render him unhappy for a
‘ time, and I should have only, by a
‘ momentary view of him, still increased
‘ those torments that I am bound ever
‘ to endure. But I deserve them all.’

The above disagreeable news from Mrs. Greville did not help to raise Miss Fanbrook’s spirits. She grew more and more dejected every moment she reflected upon it. Mrs. Romney, hoping that time would at length do more than all her own endeavours to cheer her, ceased to talk about Mr. Beecher, and only mentioned

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mentioned his name when she could not well avoid it.

While poor Sophy thus spent her melancholy hours, Juliet passed her's in all the gaiety imaginable, and every day made new conquests by her beauty. When the return of winter brought them to London, Mrs. Besfield came down with her sister Greville, to take Miss Fanbrook home with them; but she was so pleased with her situation, and Mrs. Romney had conceived such a liking for her, that they consented to let her stay with her, on condition that Mrs. Romney would agree to make Mr. Besfield's house her home in town for some part of the winter; for she generally chose to be the greatest part of the year at Windsor, and had no house in London.

Mrs. Romney was not a woman of large fortune, but she was of a genteel family. Her husband, who had a place under the government, by living up to his income, left her not a great deal at his death; but as she had no relations

who would probably ever want the little she was possessed of, and as she had been long accustomed to ease and affluence, she had purchased an annuity for her life, with part of what Mr. Romney left her, in order to increase her income. By this means she was enabled to keep a small house at Windsor, with two maids and a man servant, and to have a friend now and then with her, whenever it was agreeable. As she was now not young, and as she chose, after her husband's death, a retired life, she pitched upon Windsor, for the delightfulness of its situation, and the chance of sometimes mixing with genteel people without being always in a crowd. Her sister had married extremely well, that is, she was united to a man of family and fortune; but a man who made her pay dear for the preference he gave her. As his temper was far from amiable, and as his constitution was broken by his debaucheries, she died a martyr to nursing him in his last illness, a few weeks after his decease, and left only one son, who inherited his father's title, fortune, and indifferent constitution.

Sir

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Sir William Acres was rather pleasing in his person than otherwise, and had a very good understanding: but the care with which he had been brought up, on account of his tender health, made him unable to go thro' a course of fashionable pleasures, without suffering too many inconveniences from them. He therefore often spent several months upon his own estate, and when he wanted more than ordinary nursing, used to come to his aunt Romney's, who was fond of him, as she had scarce any other relation living. He had also a great regard for her, as she was good-natured, and had an easy cheerfulness in her manner, which recommended her very much to all young people; and they always found their account in making a friend of her, for she was of an indulgent disposition, and treated their foibles with less severity, though no-body discovered them sooner, than the generality at her age would have done. She had a way of rallying them out of their foibles, and by making them ashamed of them, induced them to get rid of them more willingly than
if

if she had exposed them with the virulence of satire.

With such a disposition it is not to be wondered at, that Mrs. Romney was more agreeable to Sir William than an aunt he had by his father's side, who, though possessed of a very large fortune, which she could leave to him if he pleased her, had but a small share of candor in her temper, and made few allowances for the manners of a young man who had never been much controlled.

As this lady chose to make Sir William long visits at his house in the country, he was often taken ill in town, and obliged to go down to Mrs. Romney's, as her house was at a much shorter distance from London than either his own or Mrs. Acres's. I say Mrs. Acres, for she was an antient maiden, and had the greatest part of her fortune left by her grand-father on the mother's side. As this lady had given him a few hints that she should spend her Christmas with him, and as he had some reason to suppose

suppose that she would make long holidays, he took care to be suddenly indisposed in town, and came down to Mrs. Romney one day quite unexpected, wrapped up in a furtout, when she and Miss Fanbrook were sitting at work after dinner.

The unexpected arrival of Sir William Acres gave no small dissatisfaction to Sophy, who would have rather engaged Mrs. Romney by herself. She was not a little disconcerted; for the company of a young man in the house, of his rank in life, laid her under some restraints which were very disagreeable to her, in her present situation. A proposal to leave the house upon his coming into it, would, she thought, however, be too abrupt, and too particular a construction might be put upon it: she rather endured his company, therefore, than enjoyed it; and found her reserve increased by it, without receiving any alteration of her melancholy.

Sir William, on the contrary, was delighted beyond measure, to find an
amiable

amiable young woman in a place where he only expected to meet with an agreeable old one, and could have hugged his aunt, for being such an excellent caterer. He soon became enamoured with the person of Sophy, which was exceeding graceful; nor did her face want powers to charm a much less discerning man than Sir William, who, long before she spoke, read her understanding in her intelligent eyes. Her manners too were perfectly elegant, and her tender melancholy gave a winning softness to her whole form, which could not fail of attracting a man who was almost perpetually with her, and whose heart was not prepossessed in favour of another.

The baronet soon found out the nature of his sentiments for her, and determined, if possible, to make her as sensible as he was himself. But as the majority of young females, with whom he had hitherto conversed, were of a turn totally different from her, he soon also found out, that to make an impression on her, would be a work of time, and that

that uncommon address would be necessary in the prosecution of his designs. He had a high relish for the pleasures of love; he had been engaged in numberless amours; and he had met with such *bonne fortune*, that every woman whom he attacked, had yielded to his embraces, either captivated by his person, or bewitched by his behaviour, which was remarkably soft and insinuating. But with regard to Miss Fanbrook, he was quite thrown out of his play. He could not tell what to make of a fine girl, who, with the most exquisite sensibility in her countenance, was entirely regardless of, and absolutely unmoved with, every thing which he said or did. He was too well versed in the Ovidian arts, to let his inclination for her appear too plainly at first; he rather wished, by the most engaging behaviour, to inspire her with a passion for him, because he flattered himself, that if he could once gain her affections, a compliance with his desires would naturally follow: but as he had not the smallest intention to ask that favour which is seldom refused to men of his rank

rank (when the heart is not pre-engaged) he was obliged to act with the greatest circumspection.

The shyness which the arrival of Sir William at first occasioned in Sophy, wore off by degrees; and as she had neither inclination for him, nor any design upon him, she displayed new charms every day, by the freedom of her air, and the easiness of her carriage. But as all his endeavours to please and amuse her (without letting her see that he was so employed) did not in the least contribute to dissipate the gloom which hung over her, he took an opportunity to ask his aunt the reason of so uncommon a dejection. His aunt, faithful to the secrets of her young friend, only replied, that she was never of a sprightly turn, and that she believed her spirits had suffered greatly by her long and dangerous illness. This answer, as he had never heard of her being in love, satisfied him for the present, as it seemed a very natural one, and he redoubled his assiduities.

Sir

Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK. 91

Sir William was immoderately fond of music, and, for a man of fashion, no mean performer himself. Sophy also had a violent taste that way, which he soon discovered; and the discovery of the same taste in Sir William was the more pleasing to her, as it continually brought Beecher to her remembrance, who was likewise very musically inclined, and took infinite pleasure in desiring her to sing, which she did in an agreeable style. She had a pretty, natural, easy, unaffected manner, which, assisted with a soft, expressive, and harmonious voice, was extremely touching and pathetic. It was a long time, however, before either Sir William or Mrs. Romney could prevail on her to give them the satisfaction of hearing her vocal powers; and when she exerted them, the former found it highly necessary to conceal the raptures which he felt at the melting accents that dropped from her tuneful tongue, for fear he should never be blessed with the sound of them again. But at last he hit upon a method to make her rather more familiar with him. He sent to London for
a fine

a fine chamber organ, and half in earnest, half in jest, offered to teach her to play upon it.

Mrs. Romney, who saw no harm at present in an intimacy which appeared to her very innocent between the parties concerned, and which made the long winter evenings in the country mighty chearful to her, joined her persuasions to Sir William's; and Sophy herself, finding this new scheme gave some relief to her over-charged heart, at last consented. Her modest diffidence, her extreme delicacy, in receiving the little freedoms which her music-master was obliged to take with her; and the fine taste and quickness of apprehension she soon discovered, in learning the lessons he gave her, conquered him so completely, that he was almost thrown off his guard; while at the same time he almost trembled, lest by discovering his passion before he had made any impression on her, he might be distanced for ever. He also thought of another method imperceptibly to ingratiate himself with her. He told her one day, in a seeming unconcerned manner, that
he

he thought riding would be of great service to her, by strengthening her nerves, in recovering her spirits; and that he had a gentle little mare in the country, which he would send for, that she might bear to ride without fear. She opposed this proposal at first; but Mrs. Romney, who wished to see her more chearful, and really believed that the exercise of riding would be very beneficial, persuaded her to consent, and in a few days Sir William had the satisfaction to assist her to mount, to ride by her side, and to take her down in his arms at her return home; at which time particularly her fear, added to her modesty in giving herself up entirely to his protection, spread a thousand new beauties over her; nor was he himself free from apprehensions while he was employed in assisting her to get down, during which moments he was almost ready to let her fall, lest, by pressing her too closely, he should make her shrink from his embrace.

Sometimes, with Mrs. Romney in company with them, they took long walks about the country, with which
Sir

Sir William becoming soon acquainted, frequently headed her little party, and carried them across fields which he knew were bounded by cramp styles and clumsy gates, that he might have the sweet satisfaction of assisting his favourite object to get over them; because, by so doing, he had an opportunity of touching her; a liberty he never dared to attempt in the house, but when he tutored her at the harpsichord, on the keys of which he ventured to press her rosy fingers.

While he was thus, by every method he could think of, endeavouring to warm her heart in his favour, his first design upon her, which was merely sensual, became, on a nearer acquaintance with her, a violent passion of the tenderest kind. As it was the first of that kind which he had ever felt, it was consequently of a stronger and more durable nature; his former amours having had very little if any correspondence with his heart. He was now scarce able to conceal his sensations; and while, by a thousand gay sallies, he tried to divert the
the

the pensive Sophia, he caught the infection, and became himself uneasy, undetermined, and thoughtful. He soon found that she was absolutely necessary to his happiness, and as soon found that he had made very little impression on her. How to proceed, therefore, he could not tell. It was not at all likely that a girl, who seemed to be rather insensible to his powers of pleasing, should ever yield to his first view, that of living with him upon his own terms; and marriage was a thing to which he had ever had an extreme aversion, and of which he never should have bestowed a thought, had his hopes in winning Sophia his own way succeeded. To marry a woman whom no-body knew, that is, none of his fashionable acquaintance; a woman with no fortune, compared to his estate; to an alliance with whom his aunt Acres would probably never give her consent, if he could bring himself to think seriously about it; all these reflections, when Sophia was absent, distracted him; but when she was present, every thing gave way to the dear delight which he received by listening to the music of

I

her

her voice when she spoke, or when she sung; then he was all tenderness, and love took possession of his heart.

This considerable change in his sentiments necessarily caused a visible alteration in his behaviour. His eyes were almost constantly fixed upon her, with the most melting languor. If she sighed, he did the same: if she moved, he was upon the wing to follow her, and assist her in every thing. If she refused or prevented his offered assistance, he threw himself into his chair with such evident marks of discontent, that a less discerning person than Mrs. Romney could not have failed to take notice of them, and to guess at the cause of his particular deportment.

Mrs. Romney, as soon as she perceived the cause of her nephew's behaviour, with regard to Sophia, thought it might be of service to them both. She was no stranger to Sir William's former conduct, and had often thought that nothing but a sincere passion for a woman of understanding and character could re-claim

claim him; and as Miss Fanbrook had so much wished for a union with a man of fortune, as to give up a man whom she loved on that account, she imagined that Sir William was the very man to suit her: and as she had no great notion of interested matches, and knew that his fortune was sufficient for both, she set herself down quietly to see how these two young people would conduct themselves. She thought also, that Sophia, being now convinced that Beecher had given her up entirely in his turn, might not be displeased with Sir William's alliance. However, she rather turned her observations on her friend, because she had yet perceived no alteration in her in favour of the baronet, while his intentions were too plain to be mistaken by any body. Sophia, indeed, was herself the slowest in discerning them, because her whole attention had been engrossed by her dear Beecher; but at last, Sir William's repeated assiduities, and something of that confusion in his manner which had at first engaged her notice in her former lover, obliged her to ob-

serve them more minutely than she had yet done, or had ever intended to do.

This discovery which Sophia made, gave her great uneasiness. She was afraid that it would occasion her to quit Mrs. Romney much sooner than she wished; for she had not the slightest inclination for Sir William, and had ever had so little of the coquette in her disposition, as to think it quite dishonourable in any woman to encourage a passion which she had no intention to gratify. The absurdity with which she acted with regard to Beecher, arose from a mere girlish love of show and splendor, mixed with envy at her cousin's supposed pre-eminence; in every other respect she was of a disinterested temper; she had few other foibles, and this appeared to her now in so glaring a light, that she heartily despised herself for it, and would have given the world to have been able to atone for it, by recalling her dear absent lover, though with half the fortune he was possessed of when she first knew him.

While

Mrs SOPHIA FANBROOK. 99

While Sophia was thus involved in new perplexities at Windsor, Juliet was extending her conquests in town. She, one night at the opera, attracted the attention of a young gentleman, just returned from making the tour of Europe, to such a degree, that he immediately enquired who she was, and resolved to make an acquaintance with her, which the company she was with, to whom he happened to be known, gave him an opportunity of doing.

Lady Bell Tryon was one of those women who are authorized by the privilege annexed to high birth, a large fortune, and a liberal education, to say and do every thing they please with the utmost freedom and unreserve. She was nobly born, had a very fine figure, and was married to a man of fashion, who gave her as extensive a power over his purse, as she had at first over his heart.

As soon as she discovered Mr. Bellair in the pit, she made him a sign to advance; and before he was within three

F 2

yards

yards of her, called out aloud, in the midst of a favourite air, exquisitely sung by Mattei, ‘ Oh Bellair, who would have
‘ dreamt of seeing you here to night,
‘ when we left you so lately in France with
‘ lord Cypher? For heaven’s sake, what
‘ have you done with him? And how
‘ could you resolve to leave the dear
‘ delights of Paris, for the heavy amuse-
‘ ments of our foggy island?’

‘ Dear lady Bell, replied the travelled
‘ beau, I submit to the justness of your
‘ ladyship’s censure: but by all that is
‘ lovely, casting a most significant look
‘ upon Juliet, nothing but some very
‘ particular affairs, which demanded my
‘ speedy return, could have brought me
‘ from those regions of life and gaiety;
‘ but upon honour, I am infinitely hap-
‘ py in meeting with your ladyship to
‘ night. I see you have not yet lost
‘ your taste for the all-inspiring air of
‘ a climate which breathes nothing but
‘ love, joy, and liberty; and egad, you
‘ are divinely handsome: but who is
‘ that *petite piece* under your ladyship’s
‘ protection to-night (continued he, in
a loud

‘ a loud whisper) let me die, but ’tis
‘ quite a little Venus, and a perfect
‘ model of one of Guido’s Madonas?’

Lord Raffle, who was at lady Bell’s elbow during the very correct speech of this continental coxcomb, said, ‘ Upon
‘ my soul, Bellair, your ideas are already
‘ very much confused by the fogs her
‘ ladyship has just been complaining of,
‘ or you would never have jumbled the
‘ goddesses of love and the mother of devotion so strangely together.’

‘ Now my dear lord, said Bellair, give
‘ me leave to say, that it is you who
‘ have confounded my ideas, by thus
‘ blending them: I meant that there
‘ was all that was the most picquant,
‘ and the most capable of giving desire
‘ in that fine countenance, corrected by
‘ the sweetest diffidence and most captivating modesty I ever beheld.’

A number of these insignificant nothings filled up the remainder of the evening; and at the end of the opera, he had the satisfaction of conducting the

blooming Juliet to lady Bell's coach, in which as soon as they were seated, my lady, whose father, the earl of ———, had been a friend to Mr. West, and who had recommended his daughter to her notice, gave her a few instructions, with regard to her behaviour to those gentlemen who might profess themselves her admirers: adding, that if she was not very much mistaken, Bellair was already taken in, or might be soon with proper management: that he was a pretty fellow; had a prettier estate; and that if such a thing could be brought about, an alliance with him would be extremely desirable, and prodigiously advantageous. ‘ Handsome girls, continued her ladyship, are now become so common, that few make any thing of their beauty; and matrimony is so expensive, when people live up to the fashionable style of life, that very few young fellows can afford to take a woman with nothing; fewer still, Juliet, chuse to do it; therefore, my dear, mind what you are about; if you do but play your cards with tolerable judgment, I fancy you may
‘ be

' be sure of your man. He is, as I
 ' said before, a pretty fellow, and has
 ' the *bon ton*, but has not the brightest
 ' intellects; all the better for a hus-
 ' band. He is vain, light, airy, and
 ' therefore may be the sooner struck
 ' with thy apparent simplicity. Men
 ' always love a contrast to themselves;
 ' and if you can but keep him from
 ' making insolent proposals, and play
 ' off your dying airs upon him, I be-
 ' lieve he may be caught. Call upon
 ' me now and then, and I will answer
 ' for your person, if I can only give
 ' you a manner. Indeed, as your aunt
 ' Besfield has brought you up so cor-
 ' rectly in her own stiff way, I shall
 ' have an infinite deal of trouble to
 ' make you look easy and disengaged;
 ' however, I shall take a pleasure in
 ' forming such young things, if they
 ' are tolerably docile.'

To this long harangue, Miss West
 only replied with a bow and a promise
 to obey entirely her ladyship in every
 respect, who, upon her arrival at her
 own house, sent Juliet home in a chair,

attended by Mr. Besfield's servant, who waited at lady Bell's for that purpose.

The first time Juliet found her aunt alone, she related all that lady Bell had said to her, except that part of it which reflected upon herself; and Mrs. Besfield, who wished to have her niece well disposed of, was much pleased to hear of a new admirer; though she was very doubtful, if a man of the fortune and rank in life Miss West had represented Mr. Bellair to be, would be inclined to marry a girl only in possession of a fine person, for her fortune was too trifling to be thought of. Besides, she had not the highest opinion of lady Bell Tryon, and could not imagine what should make her so desirous of procuring an advantageous match for Juliet; nor had she, indeed, ever been over-fond of her going often to her ladyship's, as she very wisely concluded, that nothing could be worse for young women with small fortunes, than their keeping high company, and conversing too much with people in a certain rank of life, as such connections would probably
give

give them a taste which they could never expect to gratify, or at least, take them off from the pursuit of their domestic duties, from the proper performance of which every woman's most substantial happiness arises, whom fortune has placed in a middle station of life. Very fine ladies will, I am aware, wonder to hear such a stress laid on the domestic duties; but every female, let her birth be ever so brilliant, her fortune ever so extensive, would certainly, by attending to them, render herself not only more useful to society, and more amiable to her family, but she would also receive more satisfaction; for surely that being must enjoy the truest felicity, who takes the most pains to make all around her happy.

As lady Bell happened to have discovered a particular inclination for Juliet, Mrs. Besfield was obliged to trust her to her ladyship's care much oftener than she liked; and to make her easy, Juliet had not yet given any indication of an over-fondness for any thing. She knew, indeed, that she was handsome,

and she was very well pleased to be dressed to advantage, to be seen, to be admired; but she had discovered very little sensibility. 'Tis true, she was young; but in an age so extremely forward as the present undoubtedly is, Misses not half so far advanced in years have shewn quite different propensities.

Juliet had not yet beheld any man who made an impression upon her heart; she was therefore all obedient to the will of those who were entrusted with the care of her, and made no distinction between the stately Mr. Ropy and the lively Mr. Bellair; though, to be sure, two more opposite characters never existed.

Mrs. Besfield, though she did not approve of her niece's too frequent visits to lady Bell's, as her ladyship had particularly invited her to call on her sometimes, a few days after the above-mentioned rencontre at the opera, had some thought of leaving her there one morning, when she was going that way, and
of

of calling for her as she came back; but she was prevented by lady Bell herself, who came attended by Mr. Bellair, to desire Miss West to go to an auction with them. This second and more intimate view of Juliet, finished her conquest. Mr. Bellair, before he handed her out, upon their return to her uncle's, begged leave to visit her. She assented with a modest bow. He soon availed himself of this permission; but as he never saw her at Mr. Besfield's, except in the presence of her aunt, he waited for a favourable opportunity to declare himself, which opportunity this lady, who chose that the application should be first made either to her husband or herself, was not in a hurry to give him. He therefore had recourse to his old friend lady Bell, who, after rallying him to death on being really downright in love with such a child, as she called her, became at length serious, and told him that, unless he absolutely intended marriage, he had no chance of succeeding, as Mr. Besfield, though he did not actually live in the city, was an old-fashioned merchant, and had brought the girl up

soberly. ‘ And I will not, continued
‘ her ladyship, connive at your making
‘ her otherwise: for I really believe she
‘ is altogether a modest young thing,
‘ and will make a most obedient wife;
‘ one that you may train up under
‘ your hand, and form after your own
‘ taste; which is, let me tell you, Bel-
‘ lair, a monstrous advantage, con-
‘ sidering the present genteel education
‘ of women.’

The coxcomb agreed to this, and owned, that though her figure had charms, she had nothing of the *bon ton*; she wanted a manner; a kind of an inexpressible something, which nothing but a familiarity with the polite world could give her, and which, he flattered himself, she would soon learn by the help of his instructions. ‘ My fortune
‘ is large, lady Bell, added he, and I
‘ must positively have an heir to my
‘ estate. Were I to search round the
‘ world, I should not find, I am per-
‘ suaded, a more beautiful mother to
‘ my boy than Juliet; and therefore I
‘ will even venture upon matrimony,
‘ provided

‘ provided yourself will now and then
‘ countenance her in public, that I
‘ may not be laughed at for marrying
‘ an obscure creature whom no-body
‘ knows.’

Lady Bell, with a loud laugh, promised faithfully to do what Bellair desired; and he drove away immediately to Mr. Besfield's, where he made his proposals in form. They were received by the worthy merchant, as conferring honour upon his niece; and he declared a thorough approbation of so flattering an alliance, if Miss West had no objection to it. Juliet, on being questioned about her consent, answered in the same manner she had done when Mr. Ropy's deputy made the same offers. Lady Bell also kept her word, and frequently made the destined Mrs. Bellair of her parties. This lady had more reasons than one for promoting a match so much, according to outward appearances, to Juliet's advantage. Mr. West had been, just before his death, of considerable service to her, in recovering a large sum of money which was left to her,

her, and which was litigated. But neither gratitude nor generosity were the principal motives which influenced her ladyship so much in Juliet's favour: it was rather a slight desire of revenge; a piece of malicious triumph over Bellair, who had, before her marriage with Mr. Tryon, been proposed to, and refused by him, because he thought her too old for him. My lady being informed of his reason for rejecting her, was at first highly incensed; but having at that time no way to make him sensible of her resentment, laid it aside till she had a proper opportunity, which now, in her opinion, offered, by making a match between him and a girl who had neither birth nor fortune; but who was possess'd of beauty enough amply to revenge the slight he had put upon her, if she could but be brought to have spirit enough to make use of her charms in a proper manner. This part of her scheme, however, lady Bell intended carefully to conceal till their marriage was over; and only now and then threw a few instructions artfully in Juliet's way, in regard to her future conduct in
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Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK. 111

the marriage state, for which few husbands would have thanked her.

As soon as Bellair had made his proposals in form, Mrs. Besfield and Mrs. Greville came down to make a visit to Mrs. Romney and Miss Fanbrook, and declared the joy they took in Juliet's good fortune, which Mrs. Greville, who dearly loved gaiety and parade, set off in the most lively and glaring colours.

Sir William happened to be gone to London that day, in search of new amusements for Sophia; and Mrs. Romney, who trembled for her fair friend, lest this new and so much more eligible offer for Juliet, should have as fatal an effect upon her as the last, wished they had a little suppressed some particulars which seemed the most enviable ones, or at least that they had not dwelt so long upon them: but as they were far from guessing at her thoughts upon the occasion, they set no bounds to their descriptions of the lover, of his birth, his estate, his dress, his presents; all
which

which received no small exaggeration from two lively female tongues.

The next morning, when they took their leave, they pressed Sophia to return to town with them; and she seemed a little inclined to go, merely because she thought it prudent to fly from Sir William: but her aversion to company, and the bustle in which she foresaw she should be engaged, upon the marriage of her cousin, joined to Mrs. Romney's almost insisting on her staying, determined her to follow what her inclination most led her to, and to spend her days with her dear friend.

When the above lively ladies were gone, Mrs. Romney asked Miss Fanbrook, with an arch look, how she found herself. Sophia, who comprehended the full meaning of the question, replied, without the least hesitation, ' Perfectly well. I can now hear, said she, of my cousin's going to be so well married with a real joy, and most sincerely wish her all happiness (but here she fetched a deep sigh). O! madam,

‘ dam, would I had always been of this
 ‘ way of thinking; I then should have
 ‘ been happy too, and should have
 ‘ made my poor dear Beecher so. But
 ‘ he is mine no longer. My wretched
 ‘ folly has deservedly brought all this
 ‘ misery upon me. Under what a
 ‘ strange infatuation have I been! And
 ‘ yet I do not believe, my dear Mrs.
 ‘ Romney, that any thing but this im-
 ‘ moderate love of Beecher could have
 ‘ made me sensible of my error. I
 ‘ could not bear to think of marrying
 ‘ a man whose passion I could not then
 ‘ return as I ought; but now—O were
 ‘ it not too late——but he is gone
 ‘ for ever.’

Here a shower of tears relieved her
 bursting heart, overpowered with the
 sorrows which she could not help feel-
 ing, when she reflected upon her for-
 mer happy situation; and Mrs. Rom-
 ney suffered her to give a copious vent
 to her grief, before she attempted to
 persuade her to be patient under its
 pressures, and to hope for better days.

The

The return of Sir William, with a fresh supply of new books, obliged them to break off the conversation. Sophia immediately retired to her chamber, that she might conceal the agitation of her mind. Mrs. Romney, from the natural goodness of her disposition, was glad to see that her young friend was, in a great measure, if not quite, cured of her vanity: for though Sophia had laid all this profusion of grief to the loss of her lover, her penetrating friend thought it was possible, that there might be a slight degree of envy, jealousy, or disappointment, still lurking in her breast, which time and proper remedies might eradicate. As she looked upon Sir William, if really sincere in his regard for her, as a certain cure for all, she was the more easy about her; and in order to come at the truth of this, she thought it would not be amiss to sound her nephew a little, and see whether the idea she had formed of his love for Miss Fanbrook existed any where but in her own imagination; for she was now become so truly her friend, as to be quite anxious about her happiness.

Sir

Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK. 115

Sir William, mortified at Sophia's leaving the room almost as soon as he entered it, threw himself across the sofa in sullen silence. His aunt began the conversation, with giving him an account of the visit of Mrs. Besfield and Mrs. Greville, and the intended marriage of Miss West; to all which he made no answer, till he thought how it might affect his Sophia, and then he said, 'What does Miss Fanbrook say to this?'

'Why, what every good girl ought to say, replied Mrs. Romney, that she sincerely rejoices at her cousin's approaching happiness; for certainly to be happily married, is the most desirable situation for a young girl who has neither father nor mother, and but a very small fortune for her subsistence.'

'And does she love the man who is going to marry her?' said Sir William.'

'No

‘ No doubt but she does, replied his
‘ aunt, or else she would not accept of
‘ him.’

‘ And pray, my dear aunt, said Sir
‘ William, how are men of fortune,
‘ much superior to those of the women
‘ with whom they may chuse to pass
‘ their lives, to know whether those
‘ fortunes do not make a greater im-
‘ pression on their hearts, than any
‘ thing they can say to them?’

‘ I do not know, said Mrs. Romney,
‘ with a smile, by what you men judge
‘ of the inclinations of women; but I
‘ fancy, if I was a lover, I could very
‘ easily discover whether it was my
‘ merit or my estate which determined
‘ the lady to whom I made my ad-
‘ dresses in my favour.’

‘ I have often heard say, indeed, re-
‘ plied Sir William, that no man can
‘ possibly know a woman’s disposition so
‘ well as one of her own sex, and you
‘ now confirm me in that opinion. But
‘ can you then inform me, madam,
‘ whether

‘ whether Miss Fanbrook’s heart is at
‘ liberty? for I think she is, though one
‘ of the most agreeable girls I ever met
‘ with, yet one of the most reserved.’

‘ Then I am afraid, my dear Sir
‘ William, replied Mrs. Romney, that
‘ you have conversed but little with the
‘ truly agreeable part of the sex. Miss
‘ Fanbrook is serious and modest, but
‘ I think sociable enough, considering
‘ how lately and how suddenly you
‘ have become acquainted with her.—
‘ She is a very valuable girl, and I
‘ have a great esteem for her.’

‘ And so have I, madam, said Sir
‘ William, and that is more than I could
‘ say of any woman before; but there
‘ is something so irresistibly engaging,
‘ both in Sophia’s figure and manner;
‘ something so attractive in the delicacy
‘ of her behaviour; such a melting
‘ softness in her voice, that I am no
‘ longer master of myself when I see
‘ her, or when I hear her; and could I
‘ be certain that——but what am I say-
‘ ing? how can I possibly be assured of

‘ any woman’s affection independant of
‘ my expectations?’

‘ Then you wish you had not so large
‘ an estate, Sir William, do you?’ cried
Mrs. Romney, with an arch smile.

‘ My dear aunt, said he, how cruel
‘ you are! You see that I long to
‘ have your opinion of Sophia; you see
‘ that my very soul doats on that angel
‘ of a girl, and is in an agony to know
‘ what she thinks of me, and yet you
‘ will not give me a rational answer.’

‘ My dear Sir William, said his aunt,
‘ you ask of me what it is not in my
‘ power to grant, that is, what you
‘ most want to know; for as to Miss
‘ Fanbrook, no-body can have an higher
‘ opinion of a young woman, than I
‘ have of her; and I am certain, that
‘ she will make the best wife in the
‘ world. But in regard to her senti-
‘ ments about you, I cannot give you
‘ any information, because I never
‘ heard her declare them. Supposing,
‘ however, that they should be as fa-
‘ vourable

‘vourable as you wish them to be,
‘would not Mrs. Acres oppose such
‘an unequal union in point of for-
‘tune?’

‘ I suppose she would, replied he, but were I capable of inspiring Sophia, my dear Sophia, with the same disinterested passion for me, which I now feel for her, I should be quite regardless of the whole world besides : for I have long seen that fortune alone will not make me happy ; and now I grow every hour more and more convinced, that nothing but the possession of that dear girl can make me so. But all that I say or do seems to make no kind of impression upon her, and I dread the discovery of my inclination, lest she should deprive me of the pleasure of seeing her, if it meets not with the return I wish. I speak seriously to you, madam, I cannot think of happiness without her. Advise me, therefore, my dear aunt, how to proceed. You love this amiable creature, and you have ever shewn a true regard for me. It is you alone, therefore,

‘ therefore, who can direct me how to
‘ gain her heart. Let me beg of you,
‘ by all that is dear to you, to try her,
‘ when you have an opportunity, and
‘ find out whether there are any hopes
‘ for me, and what is the most certain
‘ method to please her; for I confess,
‘ she is the first, and, indeed, the
‘ only one from whom I met with such
‘ indifference.’

‘ Perhaps then, said Mrs. Romney,
‘ as you have been so successful with
‘ the ladies, you may rather wish to
‘ conquer my poor Sophia out of va-
‘ nity than love.’

‘ No, by all that is good, replied he,
‘ eagerly, I love her with the tenderest
‘ passion; there is nothing that I would
‘ not suffer to obtain her: and I can
‘ assure you, that I am urged neither
‘ by vanity nor pride, in this so much
‘ desired conquest, which is not an ex-
‘ pression half delicate enough to de-
‘ scribe what I feel for her. I have
‘ not formed the most distant idea of
‘ conquest; my desires are all engrossed
‘ by

‘ by the dear delightful wish to see
‘ her for ever happy, and to contribute
‘ every moment to make her so. Will
‘ you not tell her this, my dear aunt,
‘ and tell her also, from yourself, that
‘ you know it to be true?’

Mrs. Romney could not help laughing at her nephew’s eagerness; but told him, she thought that a declaration of this nature would have a much better effect from his own mouth than from her’s.

‘ Perhaps it might, said he, if I
‘ could bring myself to pronounce it;
‘ but if you knew the tremour I am in
‘ whenever I approach her, and the apprehensions I have of being but coolly
‘ received, if not totally refused, you
‘ would not wonder that my fears,
‘ which I now find are inseparable from
‘ a sincere passion, render me incapable
‘ of speaking as I ought upon so interesting an occasion. Do not, therefore, I intreat you, madam, deny
‘ me a request so essential to my
‘ peace.’

The return of Sophia into the parlour put a stop to their conversation. That young lady having recovered her spirits a little, strove to receive Sir William's repeated assiduities with politeness; but with that kind of politeness, that distant civility, which gave him small hopes of succeeding with her. Mrs. Romney, however, pleased herself with the thoughts of bringing two people together, who seemed to be formed to make each other happy; for she looked upon Sir William's firm attachment to a woman of sense and honour, as the greatest blessing that could befall him; and thought, that the settling Miss Fanbrook so advantageously, would gratify every wish of her heart. This good-natured woman retained an antiquated notion, that it is infinitely better for a man of a large independent fortune to take a virtuous young woman for a wife, who has had a liberal education, and who is capable of adding gratitude to her love, than to ruin that fortune, or, what is still more valuable, his health, in keeping a mistress or two; or in marrying a woman of equal fortune

tune without one good quality, and a woman too who perhaps does not care a farthing for him, merely because she is worth so much money.

These would be very uncommon sentiments in dowager aunts and mothers who have jointures, &c. &c. &c. but they determined Mrs. Romney to give some hints to Sophia, concerning Sir William's regard for her. She did so the next day, and was surprized to find that she received her hints with real uneasiness, telling her that she had for some time discovered Sir William's particular regard for her; and that she had done all in her power to discourage his addresses, without appearing to see more than it was necessary for her to know.

' I am thoroughly sensible, madam, said
' she, of the honour intended me by
' such an offer; but the idea of my dear
' Beecher is too firmly rooted in my
' mind, ever to be effaced by any other
' object. I know, my dear friend, con-
' tinued she, you will tell me that I
' have refused him, and that he has,

‘ upon my refusal, left me for ever :
‘ nay, has perhaps attached himself by
‘ this time to another. There is, in-
‘ deed, great probability in such a con-
‘ jecture. I have reason to expect a
‘ new attachment, and I deserve to be
‘ so punished for my folly. But, be
‘ that as it may, I cannot think of lov-
‘ ing any other man, and I will not,
‘ nay I cannot ; and I am sure, from the
‘ goodness of your principles, you will
‘ not ask me to marry a man whom I
‘ never could love ; especially a man
‘ whom you are yourself bound to es-
‘ teem, both as a relation and as a friend.’

‘ But, my dear Sophia, said Mrs.
‘ Romney, when you have by time got
‘ the better of your inclination for a
‘ man whom, though you had once rea-
‘ son, yet when he is married to ano-
‘ ther, which in all probability will be
‘ the case, if it is not already so, it
‘ will be highly improper, nay, almost
‘ criminal in you even to think of :
‘ will then, I say, another deserving
‘ lover, who makes your happiness his
‘ only

‘ only concern, be so disgusting? Certainly not. He will be, he ought to be favourably received, as such offers do not happen to every woman, nor are they frequent in an age in which the passion for amassing wealth bears down every thing before it. Believe me, my dear, such a protection to a girl of your figure and merit, without parents, is not to be rejected.’

‘ But indeed, my dear Mrs. Romney, you must not be offended with your young friend, said Sophia, if she does refuse such a protection, even though she stood more in need of it than she does at present. Can you, madam, with your honest, your kind heart, which at this moment overflows with regard for me, can you persuade me to become the wife of one man, with my heart doating on another? Were Beecher married at this instant, I should not esteem him less. He is free —my refusal made him so—to chuse where he likes; and O! may heaven direct his choice to one who may be

‘ as sensible of his great worth as I am
‘ now, and make him for ever blest.
‘ This is my most fervent petition ; and
‘ this will always be my ardent prayer.
‘ If he had left me from inconstancy or
‘ caprice, I might possibly, in time,
‘ have got the better of my ill placed
‘ affection; but he was in no respect
‘ to blame ; he loved me long, nay
‘ fondly, after I had rejected him.’

‘ Not so very long neither, interrupt-
‘ ed Mrs. Romney, for he made no at-
‘ tempt to see you after you were quite
‘ recovered.’

‘ Because, replied Sophia briskly, I
‘ had declared, in the most positive
‘ terms, that my life would be sacrificed
‘ to such an interview. But, continued
‘ she, in a milder tone, I beg your par-
‘ don, my dear madam ; I am convinc-
‘ ed you mean nothing but the greatest
‘ kindness to me, and am only grieved
‘ that this discovery of Sir William’s
‘ sentiments will separate us, at least for
‘ the present, as it will be highly im-
‘ proper

‘ proper for me to remain in the house
‘ with him.’

‘ I do not see the impropriety of
‘ that at all, said Mrs. Romney, who
‘ thought her young friend’s behaviour
‘ too hasty, and had hopes that Sir
‘ William’s great attention to please
‘ might at last succeed. There is no-
‘ body, but Sir William and myself,
‘ who knows any thing of the matter;
‘ and I cannot, any more than he, con-
‘ sent to part with you yet.’

‘ Then madam, said Sophia, give me
‘ at least your promise to tell Sir Wil-
‘ liam at once, that I neither have, nor
‘ ever shall have, that regard for him
‘ which he wishes I should entertain,
‘ and that I will not remain here a day
‘ after he treats me differently from a
‘ common acquaintance : and even now
‘ I think I do wrong in not going to
‘ my uncle Besfield’s directly ; for tho’
‘ I can never be so happy any where as I
‘ am with my dear Mrs. Romney, as I
‘ scorn to trifle with the man whom I

‘ cannot love, I ought to keep out of
‘ his way, that he may not think about
‘ me.’

‘ You are so very good a girl, my
‘ dear Sophia, said Mrs. Romney, that
‘ I must wish you were my niece.’

‘ Why so? replied Miss Fanbrook;
‘ my affection for you then would be
‘ the result of duty, whereas now your
‘ merit alone is the foundation of it.’

‘ Go, you little flatterer, said Mrs.
‘ Romney, every word you utter pleads
‘ for Sir William.’

‘ He will never want an advocate,
‘ replied Sophia (her eyes sparkling
‘ with pleasure at Mrs. Romney’s
‘ friendship for her) I see, in his good
‘ aunt.’

When the two ladies came down, Sir
William, eager to know his destiny,
observed them very narrowly (for he
had flattered himself that Mrs. Rom-
ney would immediately endeavour to
discover

discover Miss Fanbrook's opinion of him) and had the mortification to find her (Who is so clear-sighted as a lover?) rather more reserved in her behaviour to him than before. He now, for the first time, wished her absent, that he might question his aunt. He questioned her, but received very little satisfaction from her answers. He pressed her again and again, to tell him if her refusal proceeded from a dislike of him, or from pre-engagement; and at last Mrs. Romney told him, that she believed Sophia could not yet wean herself from the remembrance of a former attachment.

‘ Then there are hopes for me, cried the transported baronet. A woman who has loved so truly, is capable of feeling a second passion. But my dear aunt, how came she thus unhappy? Was it possible for any man whom Miss Fanbrook had loved to quit her?’

“ Ask me no more questions, Sir.
William, for I have no more answers

‘ to give you; nor will I be importun-
‘ ed any more in regard to this affair,
‘ as I love you both, and wish to see
‘ you happy together. I know that
‘ Miss Fanbrook is a most deserving
‘ girl; and have made her acquainted
‘ with your inclination for her, at your
‘ own request. This is all I can and
‘ will do, and you, in honour, can de-
‘ fire no farther assistance from me.’

With these words she left him, to prevent any farther conversation upon a subject on which she did not chuse to enlarge, at least at that time, and Sir William was obliged to acquiesce: but this did not hinder him from behaving with the greatest tenderness to Sophia, though at the same time, it was mixed with so much respect, that she could not well take notice of it.

They were in this situation, which rather became disagreeable to Sophia, and made her again resolve to return home, when they were surprized with the arrival of a post-chaise, which brought

brought Mrs. Greville and Miss West to their door. They appeared to be in the greatest affliction, and kept not Miss Fanbrook long in suspense, for the former cried out, ‘O! my dear, the
 ‘ worst of all misfortunes to your poor
 ‘ uncle! Mr. Besfield, by having trusted
 ‘ to the honour of a correspondent
 ‘ abroad, is ruined for ever. He has
 ‘ failed all on a sudden, and your uncle,
 ‘ having large sums of money in his
 ‘ hands, cannot possibly continue his
 ‘ business, which is the greatest trou-
 ‘ ble to us; and he has been no way to
 ‘ blame in this affair, but in believing
 ‘ his supposed friend to be as just as
 ‘ himself.’

Poor Sophia was almost ready to faint at this melancholy recital, which was so abruptly made, without the least preparation; but turning to Mrs. Romney, with a face as pale as death, said, in a faltering voice, ‘I will go directly,
 ‘ madam, to London, and endeavour
 ‘ to comfort my dear uncle and aunt,
 ‘ and offer them all the little assistance
 ‘ in my power.’

G 6

‘ No,

“ No, no, child, said the careless Mrs.
“ Greville, you must not go to them,
“ they do not want you. I have brought
“ poor Juliet down to Windsor, on
“ purpose to be out of the way; for
“ her lover does not, I think, act quite
“ so well as one could wish: but young
“ fellows will be young fellows: so I
“ must go and give orders for my house
“ to be prepared for us.”

Miss West blushed extremely at this unnecessary discovery which her aunt made of her affairs before a stranger, for Sir William was in the parlour when they came in; but upon Sophia's running up stairs, he left the room, and immediately ordered his chaise to be got ready.

Mrs. Greville, upon this, went to her own house with Juliet, but not before Mrs. Romney had desired her to come and be with them till she could be properly accommodated at home.

Mrs. Romney then went up to Sophia, whom she found in tears, but yet
busied

busied in preparing to go to town. She soon made her sensible, that unless she would accept of a conveyance with Sir William, she could not go till the next morning in the stage.

‘ That must do then, madam, said the grieved, but impatient Sophia. I am loth to quit you, my dear Mrs. Romney, but I love my uncle and aunt. I will go, and give up all I have to him; it is but little, it may however be of some service to him.’

‘ You have a noble spirit, my dear Sophia, said Mrs. Romney; do, my good girl, what you think best, and then return to me, whom you shall ever find ready to receive you.’

‘ I thank you, my dear kind madam, replied she, her voice almost stifled with her tears. Let me have a place taken for to-morrow. I will come back to you, if my company can be of no use to my dear suffering friends in town.’

Mrs.

Mrs. Romney then left her, and going down met Sir William at the door, just ready to step into the post-chaise. 'Have you any commands in town, madam?' said he, or can I execute any for Miss Fanbrook? Perhaps she would chuse to send a line to Mr. Besfield.'

This request was immediately sent up to Sophia, who replied, with thanks, that she should be in town herself the next day, and was not capable of writing at that time.

Sir William then set off for London, and ordering his servants to go post, arrived at Mr. Besfield's door between eight and nine. He sent in his name, as a relation of Mrs. Romney's, and begged the favour of speaking a moment with him. Mr. Besfield, though not much disposed to entertain a stranger of Sir William's rank, as he knew what civilities his niece had met with from her friend at Windsor, and her near neighbourhood to Mrs. Greville, received Sir William with great politeness,

ness, who in a few words gave him to understand, that he was no stranger to his misfortunes nor his worth; and as the friend of Mrs. Romney, intreated him to make use of a draught upon his banker. ‘ It is but for ten thousand
‘ pounds, said Sir William, but it may
‘ perhaps help you to extricate your-
‘ self out of some of your present dif-
‘ ficulties; and if any farther sum should
‘ be necessary, you may give me credit
‘ for it.’

’Tis much easier to conceive than to describe Mr. Besfield’s astonishment, at being thus accosted by a man whom he had never seen before, at receiving marks of generosity which few old friends would think of exhibiting to a man in distress. He scarce knew how to believe that he was awake, nor what answer to return adequate to the singularity of the occasion. He was totally undetermined whether he should accept of Sir William’s generous offer or decline it. He thanked him in the warmest terms of gratitude, for interesting
himself

himself with such uncommon spirit in his affairs, but told him, ' That he hoped ' he should not want the assistance of a ' gentleman who, by being altogether ' unknown to him, had put it out of ' his power to merit so great a favour.' This speech had no other effect on Sir William, than to make him more eager to exert his generosity. Finding, however, that he was not likely to overcome Mr. Besfield's delicacy by multiplying words, he left the draught upon the table, stepped hastily into his chaise, and, after having passed the night in town, returned to Windsor early enough to find his aunt and Sophia at breakfast, though the latter was not in a way to enjoy it.

Sir William said not a word concerning the business he had transacted; but as soon as the coach appeared at the door, handed the melancholy Sophia into it, without even joining in his aunt's intreaties for her speedy return.

When the coach was driven away, Mrs. Romney could not help, from the
excessive

excessive goodness of her heart, crying out, ' There is that poor child gone to
' give up all the little fortune she is
' possessed of in the world, to the relief
' of her poor uncle.'

' Generous creature! said Sir William; and can you now, madam,
' wonder at my adoring her?

Mrs. Romney was prevented from replying, by the entrance of Mrs. Greville and Miss West. The former came to leave the latter with Mrs. Romney, telling her, she must go and call on two or three friends, and that it was not proper for Juliet to be seen moving about just then. In short, she was so indiscreet as to give sufficient hints before Sir William, that Miss West's lover had left her for the present; and that she had reason to believe he would not readily return, as he had been heard to declare, he could not think of marrying the niece of a broken merchant.

This speech of Mrs. Greville's put a scheme into Sir William's head, which
he

he would not, perhaps, otherwise have thought of, in case his offers to Mr. Besfield should not have the wished-for effect on Sophia.

As soon as Sophia arrived at her uncle's, and had given a free vent to the sorrow which so melancholy a meeting naturally excited, she begged him to make use of her fortune, assuring him, that she rather chuse to work for her living, to go to service, or to follow any honest employment to provide for herself, than to see him in distressful circumstances.

Mr. Besfield was so much affected with this most sincere proof of her affection for him, that he was for some time unable to return her an answer. When words found a passage, he thanked her in the tenderest terms for her friendly offer, but told her he would by no means touch her fortune. ' Were
' I more in want of money than I am,
' continued he, I would on no account,
' my dear niece, avail myself of your generous proposal. As to money, I think
I cannot

‘ I cannot be much embarrassed by the
 ‘ want of it at present, when I have a
 ‘ draught here, though I am not a little
 ‘ puzzled to know what to do with it.’
 He then informed her of Sir William’s
 visit, and asked her if she could account
 for the extreme generosity of a man to
 whom he was, in a manner, unknown.

Sophia was very much surprized at
 her uncle’s relation of Sir William’s
 behaviour, and thinking that she ought
 not to conceal any thing from him, told
 him every thing Mrs. Romney had said
 to her about his regard for her, with
 her own answers upon the occasion,
 only concealing her motives for refus-
 ing Beecher; and before Mr. Besfield
 could reply, thus continued: ‘ But if
 ‘ my acceptance of Sir William’s liberal
 ‘ offers, my dear uncle, will contribute
 ‘ to re-instate your affairs to your sa-
 ‘ tisfaction, I will chearfully give up
 ‘ myself for your honour, happiness, and
 ‘ prosperity. Though I have not the
 ‘ least inclination for Sir William, his
 ‘ uncommon behaviour to you, at a
 ‘ time

‘ time when you so much stood in need
‘ of a friend, will at least fill me with
‘ grateful sensations, and those will
‘ teach me to return that love which
‘ I do not, cannot, at present, feel for
‘ him.’

Here she turned aside, to wipe away
some tears which trickled from her eyes,
and to stifle a sigh which she could not
suppress, and thus proceeded:

‘ I should look upon myself in a very
‘ criminal light, were I to accept of Sir
‘ William merely for his fortune on my
‘ own account; but as he is endeavour-
‘ ing, by giving part of that fortune so
‘ generously to my dear uncle, to pur-
‘ chase my esteem, I shall not be guilty
‘ of any falsehood to him, if, before I
‘ consent to his wishes, I tell him that
‘ his behaviour to you had determined
‘ my conduct.’

Sophia, though she so far declared her
mind, with all the resolution she was
able to assume on so interesting an occa-
sion,

sion, was far from being thoroughly happy by the declaration of it. The thoughts of giving up Beecher for ever, hindered her from her being easy with the steps she had taken. But when she also reflected that she was going to be married to a man, to whom, in her opinion, she ought not to give the least encouragement (so high were her notions of honour) she was almost distracted. Mr. Besfield, who always loved her, and had now more reason than ever to regard her with the eyes of affection, watched her very closely, all the time she was speaking, and soon discovered, by the emotion she was in, how dearly such a sacrifice of herself would cost her. He therefore immediately determined how to act. Taking her in his arms, while his manly tears, which he could not conceal, fell down his face: ‘ Be comforted, my dear, said he, with having shewn, a generous regard for an uncle very uncommon in a girl of your age. I shall ever most gratefully remember this noble proof of your affection for
‘ me,

‘ me, and hope that Providence, infi-
‘ nitely good, may yet enable me one
‘ day to shew that gratitude which I
‘ feel, in a better manner than I do at
‘ present. But I will not accept of
‘ your kind offer, my dear niece. If
‘ I cannot make you more happy than
‘ you are, I would not contribute to
‘ render you less so for millions. Do
‘ not weep, my dear ; my affairs, tho’
‘ much entangled, are not, thank God,
‘ desperate: they may be retrieved,
‘ without my having recourse to Sir
‘ William’s generosity. You shall not
‘ accept of him on my account ; but
‘ his behaviour has certainly been on
‘ this occasion unexceptionable. Many
‘ young men would have made a merit
‘ of so handsome a present either with
‘ you or me. I will carry you back to
‘ Windsor to-morrow, as I think that
‘ the good Mrs. Romney will be better
‘ able to amuse you than either your
‘ aunt or I just now ; and then I intend
‘ to return the draught to him, and
‘ to tell him that I have no occasion
‘ for it.’

Mrs.

Mrs. Besfield now entered the room; she had been to speak to an acquaintance, who had it in his power to serve her husband, who soon made her acquainted with Sophia's great affection for them, and his own determination upon so interesting an event. Mr. and Mrs. Besfield seldom differed in their opinions on any subject; on this they were heartily unanimous. The latter only said, 'That it was a pity Sophy could not like either of the gentlemen for her own sake, who had discovered so sincere a regard for her; and added, that she wished poor Juliet had been so much in the way of fortune, as she seemed more disposed to accept of her favours.'

Sophia blushed very much at this remark of her aunt's, and said, that people's inclinations were not always in their own power; she pitied her cousin, and wished her well married.

'I am, indeed, truly concerned,' said the worthy merchant, that my misfortunes should prevent Miss West's

‘ West’s marriage; but I think that a
‘ man who leaves a girl out of pride,
‘ for an accident in the family, in which
‘ she is no way concerned, and which
‘ can reflect no sort of dishonour upon
‘ her, is very undeserving of her, and so
‘ contemptible a character, that one
‘ would be rather glad of escaping any
‘ connection with him; but as to thy
‘ lovers, my dear Sophia, continued he,
‘ turning to her, they are men of worth
‘ and honour. Since, however, they
‘ are not agreeable to you, most justly
‘ do you act by them in refusing them;
‘ and I pray heaven to grant you such
‘ an union, as your own gentle heart
‘ most wishes for, and which may pro-
‘ duce all the blessings for you which
‘ this world can afford!’

Sophia’s heart was too full to thank her kind uncle for his earnest prayers and warm wishes in her behalf. She only made him a grateful and respectful curtsy, and left the room.

Mr. Besfield the next morning took Sophia down in a post-chaise to Wind-
6 for,

for, and, alighting at Mrs. Greville's, left her there, telling that lady that he would return to her presently. He then went to Mrs. Romney's, where he found Sir William, whom he accosted with much respect, and to whom he returned the note, saying, 'That though he had the
' good fortune not to stand in need of
' such assistance, he should ever remem-
' ber, with gratitude and pleasure, so
' genteel, so generous an offer.'

Sir William was both disappointed and chagrined at his refusal; but endeavoured to conceal his vexation and his surprize from Mr. Besfield (though they were too visible in his countenance to be mistaken) and Mrs. Romney, coming down stairs, received him with the greatest cordiality, asking eagerly after Sophia, whom she hoped he had met with, as she was very desirous of seeing him, and enlarged much in her young friend's favour.

' She is indeed, madam, replied Mr.
' Besfield, not only a very agreeable,
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‘ but a most worthy young creature;
‘ and I can assure you, I little expected
‘ to meet with any one who could act
‘ in the manner she has done.’

Sir William could not hear the praises so justly bestowed on Miss Fanbrook, without feeling a kind of melancholy pleasure; for though he was transported to find his taste generally approved of, the apprehension, nay assurance, by Mr. Besfield’s returning the draught, that she was determined not to be his, gave him a most poignant sorrow. The entrance of Sophia herself, who ran to her dear Mrs. Romney, and then turning to Sir William, addressed herself to him in a manner totally altered, roused him a little from the reverie he had been thrown into upon her account, and gave a new turn to his spirits.

Sophia, though she still seriously retained her resolution with regard to Sir William as a husband, was so affected by his uncommon behaviour to her uncle, that she felt that kind of esteem

for him, which we naturally feel for those who are capable of doing any great and good actions. Besides, what he had done, he had done for her, from his great love for her: this consideration, therefore, interested her generous mind doubly in his favour, and ennobled her esteem. She found herself, from this time, imperceptibly more inclined to converse with him than ever: she even went so far as to wish that she could bring herself to like him, merely out of gratitude. This disposition of her's rendered her infinitely more attentive to his numberless assiduities, and gave birth to a hope that he might be one day able to make an impression upon her heart.

While Sir William was thus vainly flattering himself that he should in time bring Sophia to return his affection, Juliet, who till now had been totally insensible of love, though surrounded by admirers, and actually engaged to marry, with her own consent, a man every way agreeable in his person, and esteemed

so in his manners by most women, became, all at once, very much interested in every thing which regarded Sir William.

Mr. Besfield left Windsor the day after his arrival there. Mrs. Greville's violent love of variety not permitting her to pass much of her time either at home or at Mrs. Romney's, left her niece pretty much to herself, who, both from inclination and out of politeness, accepted frequently of the last lady's invitation to be with her cousin at her house, and by that means had frequent opportunities to observe the behaviour of Sir William, whose person, which has been already placed in no disadvantageous light, and whose generous offer to her uncle, together with his constant attachment to Miss Fanbrook, had such an effect upon her young heart, that she felt for him what she had hitherto been quite unacquainted with, and what she therefore was the less able to disguise. She had never, indeed, yet seen a man thoroughly in love, except Mr. Beecher;
and

and she was at that time too much engaged herself in a continual round of pleasure, to pay much regard to his behaviour to Sophia: and as to Mr. Ropy and Mr. Bellair, though very different in many respects, they were entirely actuated by the same motive, a desire of possessing her person alone, without bestowing a single thought about gaining her heart, which they seemed to set not the least value upon. But in Sir William's melancholy air, whenever Sophia was absent; the joy which shone in his eyes at her return; his sighs when he apprehended that he should not succeed in his endeavours to please her; and the faint smiles which were in a manner forced from him by the chearful Mrs. Romney, who sometimes complained, and not without reason, of the silence of her three young guests; all these circumstances filled the tender bosom of Juliet with sensations of pity; and when pity enters the female breast, it is soon succeeded by a more tender passion.

Unexperienced, however, as Juliet was in concealing her feelings, they remain-

ed, for some time, undiscovered by any body. Mrs. Romney, though mistress of a good deal of penetration, was too much taken up in watching the effect of Sir William's tenderness upon Sophia to mind Juliet, whom she looked upon as a mere child, who had no notion of any thing but setting her little self off to the best advantage, and obeying implicitly the will of those who had a right to direct her: and Sir William's whole soul was so entirely fixed upon Sophia, that he hardly ever turned his eyes towards Juliet.

Miss Fanbrook herself was, indeed, the person most at leisure to make observations: but as she had never heard Juliet express the least idea of the passion of love, and had always imagined her to be fond of gaiety, she concluded that her seriousness arose from the dull life she now led, so different from that to which she had been accustomed; and it was, perhaps, in some measure owing to this kind of solitude, that Miss West, having nothing to divert her thoughts, fixed them all on one object, till her inclination

clination grew too strong to be resisted. What contributed very much to strengthen it, was a sudden change in Sir William in her favour.

Miss Fanbrook's gratitude, joined to her natural sweetness of disposition, raised at length her lover's hopes so high, that he began to think he had at last touched her heart. Sophia, as soon as she perceived the situation of his mind, by the cheerfulness of his behaviour, thought it absolutely necessary to assume her former coolness of carriage, as she had too much honour to give the slightest encouragement where she did not intend to give her heart.

This change alarmed Sir William extremely, who, from being ignorant of the real cause of it, took a very wrong method for its removal. He attempted to bring her back to her former cheerfulness and unreserve by making her jealous. This way of proceeding had, perhaps, never entered his head, if Juliet, quite young, lovely, and always

ready at his elbow, had not appeared so very proper an object for his purpose. He now therefore paid her, whom he had before altogether disregarded, a thousand little attentions, which, though so far from being offered with that warmth with which he used to pay them to Sophia, that they were rather polite than passionate, had such an extraordinary effect on poor innocent Juliet, as to raise her inclinations to that pitch, that she was unable to conceal them any longer, if she had been convinced of the necessity of such a concealment.

Mrs. Romney was the first who took notice of the alteration of Juliet, which she did when she and Sophia were by themselves. ‘ Have not you made the
‘ same remark, said she ? Well, I de-
‘ clare, if I had ever imagined Sir Wil-
‘ liam capable of behaving in such a
‘ manner at my house, as to endeavour
‘ to gain the affections of two girls of
‘ character at the same time, I would
‘ not have suffered him to remain an
‘ hour

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‘ hour with me; and I shall now very
‘ severely reprimand him for coquetting
‘ with Miss West; and shall desire Mrs.
‘ Greville to keep her at home till she
‘ leaves Windsor. I have always wished,
‘ my dear Miss Fanbrook, continued
‘ she, to have you allied to me, since I
‘ knew the real goodness of your heart;
‘ and I as sincerely believed that you
‘ had made an entire convert of Sir
‘ William; but his playing the fool
‘ with Miss West, makes me see but too
‘ clearly, that a young man of loose
‘ morals is not so easily reclaimed as I
‘ flattered myself he would be. I shall,
‘ therefore, write a line to Mrs. Besfield
‘ to send for Miss West to town, for I
‘ do not think that your aunt Greville,
‘ my dear, is so proper to be trusted with
‘ so fine a girl, or to be acquainted with
‘ my sentiments on this affair.’

‘ Why should you, my dear madam,
‘ replied Sophia, be averse to the call-
‘ ing my cousin niece, if Sir William’s
‘ inclinations are changed? Her fortune
‘ is pretty nearly the same with mine,

‘ though not to be mentioned in competition with his estate: yet her person is unexceptionable; and the care which has been taken of her youth, has rendered her reputation unblemished: and as to her disposition, she is meek, modest, and inoffensive; if she has not a capacity to charm, she is tainted with fewer faults than those who are perhaps more capable of pleasing in conversation. If Sir William, therefore, is inclined to take a wife with little or no money, I am of opinion that he cannot do better.’

‘ And have you really, said Mrs. Romney, so little vanity remaining, Sophia, and are you so totally indifferent to my nephew, that you could see your cousin in possession of the fortune, title, and heart, which you so lately had at your own refusal?’

‘ Do not remind me of my vanity, dear madam, said she; I never remember it but with the utmost horror, as it has for ever ruined my peace: and as
‘ for

‘ for Sir William, I think of him as I
‘ always did. I wish him happy ; and
‘ though I cannot make him so myself,
‘ I am too much indebted to him, not
‘ to do every thing in my power to for-
‘ ward his felicity with another. If,
‘ therefore, he has transferred his incli-
‘ nations from me to Juliet, why are you
‘ angry with him ?’

‘ Because I think, said Mrs. Rom-
‘ ney, that a man who can so soon and
‘ so easily transfer his affections from
‘ one object to another, has no sincere
‘ regard for either of them, and con-
‘ sequently is undeserving of the affec-
‘ tion of an amiable woman.’

The entrance of Juliet, to inform
them that her aunt Greville was below,
put a stop to their conversation for the
present ; and they went down into the
parlour, in which they found Sir Wil-
liam and that lady, with a letter in her
hand from Mr. Besfield to Sophia,
which, she told her, her servant had
that moment brought from London ;

but added, that she could not stay to hear it, being just going to a card party, where they waited for her.

As Mrs. Romney and Juliet waited on her to the door, Sophia immediately broke the seals, and upon reading a few lines, fainted away upon the sofa on which she sat. Sir William, who still loved her with the same unabated ardor, flew to her assistance, at the same time calling loudly for help, and was found by Mrs. Romney and Miss West supporting her in his arms, with a face almost as pale as her's, and expressing his surprize at her condition, in terms of the most extravagant tenderness.

What a sight was this for poor Juliet! She now too plainly perceived that she had been intirely mistaken with regard to Sir William, and that he was still firmly attached to Miss Fanbrook alone. This unexpected discovery filled her with the deepest despair. She seemed to be absolutely confounded at it, and so thoroughly was she absorbed
in

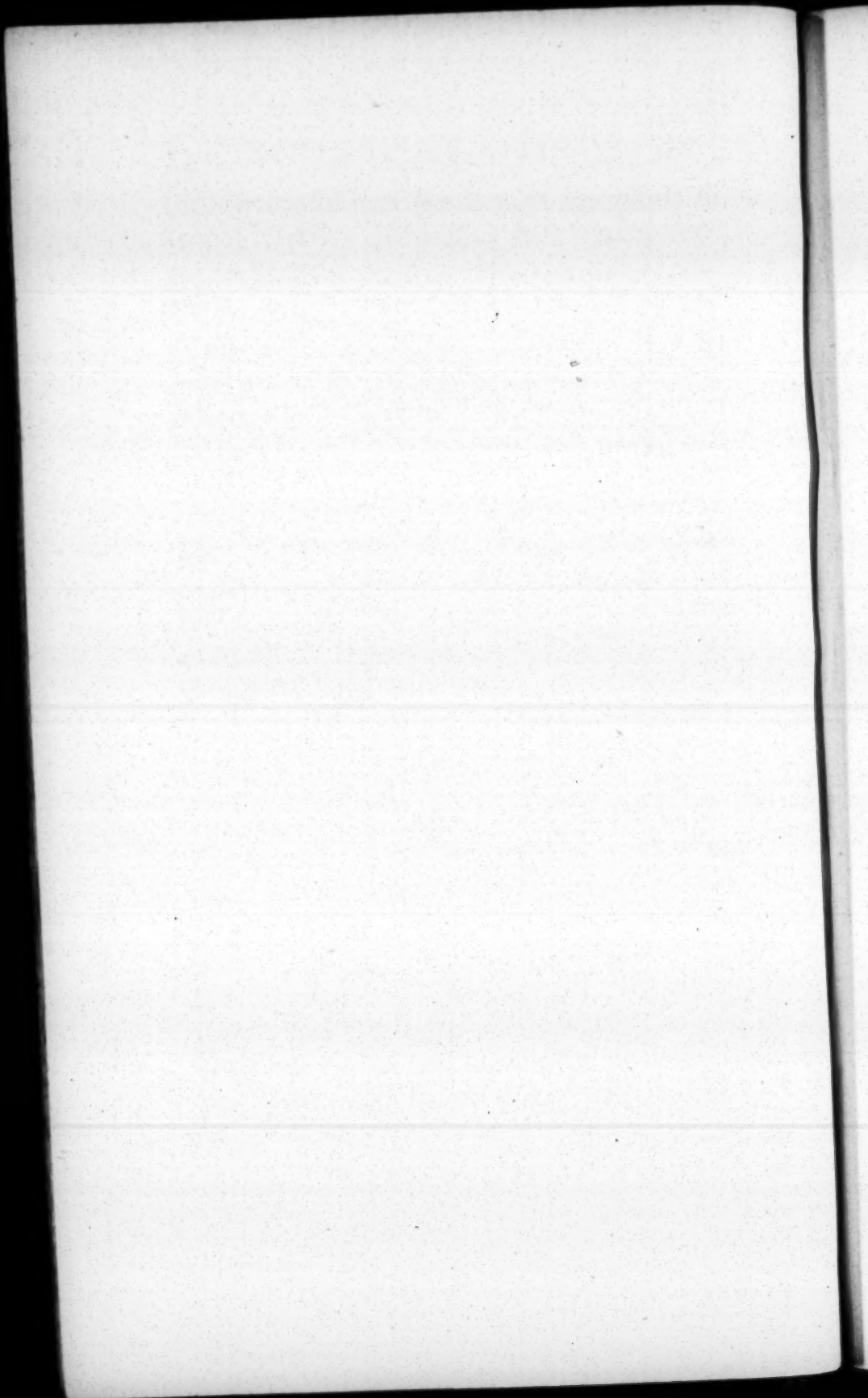
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in thought, that she stood like a statue, motionless and insensible. Mrs. Romney, who was also a little astonished at seeing Sophia so suddenly thrown into such a disordered situation, had, however, presence of mind enough to seize the letter which had fallen half-read upon the floor.

When Sophia had somewhat recovered her senses, and felt the condition she was in, she fetched a heavy sigh, and, endeavouring to rise from her seat, said to Mrs. Romney, ‘ I am not at all well, ‘ madam, and should be glad to go up ‘ stairs.’

End of the Second Book.

T H E



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
Miss SOPHIA FANBROOK.
B O O K III.

SIR William, with the tenderest anxiety, begged she would permit him to assist her in getting to her apartment; but she civilly declined his offer, by saying, that she was rather better; and, taking Mrs. Romney by the arm, walked out of the room. Sir William looked after her, and

and then walked up and down the parlour with the greatest emotion, while Juliet sat, weeping, disregarded in a corner of it.

As soon as Mrs. Romney and her young friend got up stairs, the former cried, ‘ For heaven’s sake, my dear, ‘ what shocking news does this paper ‘ contain, to throw you into this condition? you have absolutely frightened ‘ me.’

‘ Oh! madam, replied Sophia, I am ‘ quite ashamed of my weakness, but I ‘ cannot hear that Beecher is for ever ‘ lost to me, without lamenting my own ‘ folly. He is married, madam, he is ‘ married’——

Here a torrent of tears choked her voice, while Mrs. Romney read the letter, wherein her uncle, among other things, informed her that he had just heard from a correspondent at Leghorn, that Mr. Beecher had been married a fortnight to a very agreeable woman,
the

the daughter of an English merchant who was settled there.

Mr. Besfield, though he did not in express terms mention any thing about Sir William's offer to Sophia, had worded Beecher's marriage in so particular a manner, that the truth of it could not be doubted; and at the same time gave her a hint, that nothing but her own inclination could prevent her from accepting Sir William. This hint struck her so much, that she intreated Mrs. Romney not to mention the real cause of her disorder to him, for fear it should fill him with false hopes. ' He may, ' said she, by seeing me so affected with ' the news of Mr. Beecher's marriage, ' conclude that I had some interest in it, ' and that he may now stand a chance ' to succeed in his addresses; for I believe, madam, continued she, that Sir ' William's regard for me is as great as ' ever.'

' I dare say it is, my dear, said Mrs. ' Romney, for he behaved quite like a ' madman

‘ madman while you was so ill: but
‘ then, how can you account for his co-
‘ quetting with Juliet? I declare, I
‘ begin to be afraid that he has bad
‘ designs upon you both. However,
‘ could you now, my dear Sophia, now
‘ Beecher is irretrievably lost, prevail on
‘ yourself (if Sir William has really
‘ honest intentions) to become his wife,
‘ I do think that your sweet temper,
‘ and engaging manners, would entirely
‘ cure him of his follies: and I really
‘ believe, that in a very short time, his
‘ fondness for you would make you
‘ not at all regret your having refused
‘ Beecher.’

‘ Oh! dear Mrs. Romney, said So-
‘ phia, how little do you know of my
‘ heart, to think of me as you do? No,
‘ madam, I can never love any man
‘ now; let me leave you, and stay in
‘ town till Sir William is gone, and then
‘ I will come to you again.’

Sophia added to this speech every
argument she could think of to pre-
vail

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vail on her friend to consent to her departure, but in vain. Mrs. Romney still fancied, that as Beecher was settled abroad, and could never be her's, Sophia would in time, if Sir William behaved properly, agree to have him; and that by this means she should entirely work a reformation in her nephew, and make both him and her amiable friend perfectly happy. However, as he had very much displeased her by trifling with Miss West, she determined not to interfere with his addresses to Sophia, but leave him to his own management.

When she came down stairs, Sir William enquired so particularly after Sophia, and expressed so much concern for her, that he thereby exceedingly distressed poor Juliet, who looked so dejected, and fetched such deep sighs, that Mrs. Romney became really uneasy on her account, and sent her up to Sophia, to be out of Sir William's sight till Mrs. Greville came home.

As

As soon as Juliet went out of the room, Sir William, sitting down by his aunt, begged her in the strongest manner, to tell him what was the cause of Sophia's sudden illness; assuring her, that he loved her to such a fond degree, that he could neither support her sorrow or her indifference. 'If the
' forfeiture of my life, madam, said he,
' with extreme earnestness, would make
' her happy, or move her heart to pity
' me, and to return my passion, I would
' offer it up with pleasure.'

Upon this speech, which was delivered in so forcible a manner as to remove all doubts of his sincerity, Mrs. Romney turned to him, and looking at him with a sternness in her air which she had never assumed before, thus addressed him: 'And to what purpose, Sir William, do you talk to me in this way?
' How can I give credit to any thing
' you tell me, when your words and
' actions are so opposite? for at the
' the very time that you profess the
' highest regard for Miss Fanbrook, you
are

‘ are encouraging Miss West to imagine that you are enamoured with her.
‘ Can a man, who is not absolutely void of honour, make two young ladies at once flatter themselves, that he is in love with them both? There is something so ungenerous, not to say cruel, in such behaviour, that I never thought you would have given me occasion to reproach you with it, at least in my own house. I must tell you freely, therefore, Sir William, that I insist upon an immediate alteration in your carriage, or your departure from this place.’

‘ My dear aunt, replied Sir William, interrupting her, let me intreat you to hear me but for a moment; you will then be convinced that I am not so guilty as you suppose. You have been no stranger to my ardent love for Sophia from the first; and you must be sensible from her behaviour to me, as well as from her own confession to you, for I know you are intrusted with all her secrets, that all my
‘ endea-

‘ endeavours to please proved ineffec-
‘ tual, till after her last return from
‘ London. I then perceived, or I fan-
‘ cied that I perceived, an alteration in
‘ my favour; upon which I felt trans-
‘ ports which I could not conceal. But
‘ on a sudden she became so indifferent
‘ again, that half distracted, and not
‘ knowing what method to take, I made
‘ an effort to rouse her sensibility, by
‘ paying a few civilities to her cousin;
‘ though any body, possessed of the least
‘ penetration, might see with what re-
‘ luctance I acted in this manner, and
‘ how awkwardly I adopted a carriage
‘ at which my heart revolted. It has no
‘ other effect, I find, than to make you
‘ offended with me; you, who once so
‘ far interested yourself in my behalf,
‘ as to wish me capable of inspiring
‘ this lovely insensible creature with
‘ the same tender sentiments I feel for
‘ her.’

‘ Yes, Sir, replied Mrs. Romney,
‘ warmly, it has had other effects, of
‘ which perhaps you are sensible, tho’
‘ you

‘ you may not chuse to own them. It
‘ has made a modest, innocent, young
‘ girl believe that you are in love with
‘ her; you can neither be so ignorant,
‘ nor so assured, I think, as to deny
‘ that your fooleries with Miss West
‘ have made her imagine that you have
‘ taken a great fancy to her, to suppose
‘ no worse; and let me tell you, Sir
‘ William, a man cannot be capable of
‘ doing a more villanous action, than in
‘ pretending a passion where he has
‘ none, or not an honourable one; and
‘ attempting to make a woman like
‘ him, when he has no design to re-
‘ turn her inclination, only to serve the
‘ worst of purposes. There is no wo-
‘ man who may not be happy in any
‘ station of life, if her mind is at peace,
‘ and her reputation unsullied; but the
‘ most beautiful person, and the most
‘ splendid situation, cannot confer hap-
‘ piness when the character is tainted,
‘ or the heart corrupted, by a guilty
‘ or an unreturned passion: and tho’
‘ Miss West’s youth and inexperience
‘ have led her into an error on your
‘ account,

‘ account, I dare say, she has too good
‘ an understanding not to be soon cured
‘ of a ridiculous propensity to like a
‘ man who is, or at least pretends to be,
‘ so much in love with her cousin. In
‘ short, Sir William, you have affronted
‘ both these good girls, and doubly af-
‘ fronted me, by chusing to act so under
‘ my roof.’

‘ My dear madam, said Sir William, I
‘ am quite mortified at your reproofs, and
‘ the more so, because I have appeared,
‘ both to you and to my dear Sophia,
‘ to deserve them; but indeed I do not.
‘ I never had the slightest inclination
‘ for Miss West; I have frankly told
‘ you the reason why I seemed to be
‘ pleased with her, and I believe I was
‘ to blame; but if my behaviour has
‘ made my Sophia wish to recal me, I
‘ cannot repent of it, no, if I was to
‘ die for it. How could you say, my
‘ dear aunt, that I only pretended to
‘ love that dear angel? when I swear to
‘ you that I have no hopes of happi-
‘ ness, but in rendering her one day
‘ less

‘ less indifferent to me; and to convince you of my sincerity, there is nothing, though ever so disagreeable, to which I will not cheerfully submit, to gain her consent to be for ever mine, and to make every hour of her life happy, after that blessed moment. Tell her this, my dear aunt, and prevail on her to pardon me, if I have said or done any thing to offend her.’

‘ I have told you already, Sir William, said Mrs. Romney, and I tell you again, that I will not say any thing about you, and desire never to be troubled more upon this subject.’

This was all the answer he could get from her, though he tried above an hour, while they were together, by every art he was master of, to bring her into a disposition more favourable to his wishes. At last she left him to sigh by himself, and went up to comfort Sophia, as Juliet was sent for home by Mrs. Greville, whose company at that juncture

ture was irksome to her cousin, not very well knowing what turn to give to her sudden indisposition, though quite at liberty to indulge her own disagreeable reflections, as Juliet appeared so dejected, lost in thought, and void of all curiosity with regard to her.

Mrs. Romney kept her word with Sir William, and though she spent the evening with Miss Fanbrook, never once mentioned him : but as soon as she rose the next morning, she wrote, without consulting Sophia, to Mrs. Besfield, advising her as a friend to take home Miss West, because she thought she was too much left to herself at her aunt Greville's.

Miss West came again in the morning, with a pretence to see how her cousin did, but in reality to watch if there was no probability of Sir William's returning civility to her; for his entire neglect, the evening before, had given her so much disquiet, that she had not closed her eyes all night, which were

now

now fixed on him, in so languishing a manner, that the greatest novice in love could not have been mistaken in their meaning; not that there would have been the least impropriety in her looks, if they had been directed to a man possessed of an honourable passion for her; for she was extremely modest, and had never entertained an improper idea. She really loved Sir William, because she thought him the most amiable man she had ever seen, and esteemed him for his generous offer to her uncle. His assiduities to her cousin, as they really resulted from a sincere and violent affection, appeared infinitely more agreeable to her than those which she had received from her own lovers, as they were either more flighty and less delicate; and her observations on those assiduities, as she had no employment to divide her attention, made such an impression upon her, that when she herself was also favoured with a few of his douceurs, he became too powerful to be resisted.

This morning's interview, however, deprived poor Juliet of all hopes; for Sir William, had he not been documented by his aunt the preceding day, was too much taken up with attending to Sophia, to bestow a single look upon her. His eyes were constantly fixed on Sophia, and more tenderly too than ever, because he was fearful of having displeased her, and dreaded so much the doing it again, that he seemed to be in an agony. Besides, her pale complexion, and all the appearance of want of rest, and of having shed abundance of tears, gave him so much real uneasiness for fear her health should be thereby injured, that he never looked, even in her eyes, so wretched as he did at that instant. It was to no purpose that Mrs. Romney pressed those young people to eat their breakfast. Sophia, though so very unhappy, was still the most collected of the three, and did every thing in her power to prevent her friend from not having a chearful repast; while Sir William, wholly engrossed by her, said as she said, and did as she did. As for
poor

poor Juliet, she neither spoke nor eat at all.

As soon as the tea-things were removed, Mrs. Romney took Juliet with her to Mrs. Greville. Sir William seized this opportunity to stop Sophia, who was retiring to her own apartment, and, on his knees, trembling, almost deprived of the power of speaking, intreated to be heard. His distressed looks, and the tender confusion he was in, moved her compassion, though they did not excite her love. She desired him to rise, and be more composed. These words just gave him spirits enough to proceed. He begged her forgiveness for his treatment of Miss West, and told her that despair alone had driven him to it; and added, ‘That if she would only con-
 ‘descend to tell him, if any thing could
 ‘possibly render him less disagreeable
 ‘to her, his future conduct should be
 ‘entirely regulated by her commands.’

Poor Sophia, whose heart was already thoroughly softened by her own afflictions,

tions, could not behold a man who discovered every moment so violent and sincere a desire to give her pleasure, without being touched. She told him, that she had endeavoured to oblige her dear friend Mrs. Romney, and out of regard to him, to think of him in the manner he wished; but that she was concerned to inform him it was impossible, because she saw it affected him so sensibly. ‘Be assured, Sir William,’ continued she, ‘it is totally out of my power to return the regard you profess for me, because my heart was long before I knew you, attached to another.’

Here the remembrance of Beecher, with all his amiable qualities, and the bitter reflection that she ought to think of him no more, renewed her grief, and she again made an effort to quit the room.

‘Heavens, cried Sir William, gently stopping her, what can have occasioned a separation between you?’

‘O Sir,

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‘ O Sir, replied Sophia hastily, and
‘ bursting into tears, which she could
‘ no longer retain, ask me no farther.’
With this abrupt request she left him.

Mrs. Romney, at her return, found
Sir William in so dejected a way, that
she began seriously to pity his situation;
and after having sat some time, fell into
chat on common subjects; but observ-
ing that he made no answer to any
thing she said, she at last asked him if
he was not well.

‘ No, madam, replied he with a sigh,
‘ nor shall I ever be so.’

‘ I am sorry to hear that, said Mrs.
‘ Romney, though I really think that if
‘ you did not thus indulge yourself in
‘ fancies which may never be gratified,
‘ you would be a great deal better than
‘ you are. If Miss Fanbrook cannot
‘ bring herself to listen to your ad-
‘ dresses, why will you not make
‘ them to Miss West? who would not,
‘ if you will allow me to have any pe-
‘ netration,

‘ netration, refuse you; and she is, to
‘ be sure, in the eyes of the world, a
‘ much finer girl than Sophia; besides,
‘ I do not believe there is a more modest
‘ tractable young creature any where to
‘ be found; and in a wife, Sir William,
‘ good-nature, good-humour, and mo-
‘ desty, are excellent qualities.’

‘ A finer girl than Sophia! cried Sir
‘ William, darting an indignant look at
‘ Mrs. Romney; and thought so by the
‘ world! then it is only because Sophia
‘ is so little known in the world; and
‘ let me tell you, madam, those who
‘ prefer Miss West to my dear Sophia,
‘ whatever be their rank, must have a
‘ wretched taste indeed. I flattered
‘ myself that you had been too sensible
‘ of the worth of that lovely creature,
‘ not to set a just value upon it; but
‘ if you are yet unacquainted with her
‘ merit, madam, I will tell you, that
‘ few men, who have any judgment in
‘ women, notwithstanding Juliet’s beau-
‘ ty, would hesitate a moment to which
‘ to give the preference. Juliet has a
‘ fair

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‘ fair complexion, I allow; but there is
‘ in Sophia’s skin such a brightness,
‘ such a warm colouring, and when her
‘ features are animated in conversation,
‘ there is such a spirit of sensibility in
‘ her eyes, that the more you look at
‘ her, the more her loveliness increases.
‘ Juliet’s eyes you will say are fine.
‘ Large they are, I confess, and of a
‘ lively blue, but there is no meaning
‘ in them; whereas in those of Sophia,
‘ there is at different times such a beau-
‘ tiful languor, and such a dazzling
‘ brilliancy, that one can hardly stand
‘ against their lustre. Then her hair is
‘ of so delicate a brown; her neck is so
‘ elegantly turned; her hands are so
‘ gracefully formed, and of so pure a
‘ white; and, in short, her whole person
‘ is at once so alluring and command-
‘ ing, that I, who have seen a thou-
‘ sand women, all reckoned beauties,
‘ never saw such a woman, so every
‘ way bewitching. But setting aside
‘ all her personal advantages, where
‘ shall I meet with a woman who has
‘ so many graces in every gesture? who
‘ has

‘ has so happy an art of saying and
‘ doing the most trifling things in so
‘ enchanting a manner, as to render
‘ them really important? For conver-
‘ sation too, where shall I find her
‘ equal? how entertainingly she talks
‘ on every subject? what judicious re-
‘ flections does she make? how musical
‘ is her voice, and how winning are all
‘ her ways? In short, madam, for I
‘ could speak by the hour in her praise,
‘ were Sophia now married to another,
‘ I could not bear to think of Juliet;
‘ and if the dear angel, of whom I have
‘ been talking, had not half the graces of
‘ person she has, I would chuse her for
‘ the friend of my heart, and the delight-
‘ ful companion of my life, before the
‘ most perfect figure nature ever made.’

‘ Why really, Sir William, said his
‘ aunt (with a smile, which shewed that
‘ she was far from being displeased with
‘ his sentiments in Sophia’s favour) you
‘ are got quite into the high style of
‘ description, I confess; and I am really
‘ concerned, that Miss Fanbrook has
‘ not

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‘ not a heart to bestow where I hope it
‘ would be deserved.’

‘ I have then still, madam, a comfort,
‘ said Sir William, which I despair-
‘ ed of, that is, bringing you over
‘ to my side; and though you have so
‘ peremptorily refused to say any more
‘ to Miss Fanbrook in my favour, I
‘ flatter myself that you will, notwith-
‘ standing, be friendly enough to us
‘ both, not to deny the request I am
‘ going to solicit. The dear unhappy
‘ girl, just now with her sweet eyes full
‘ of tears, the sight of which almost
‘ unmanned me, told me that she had
‘ an attachment to another, but she
‘ would tell me no more. And now, ma-
‘ dam, as I imagine that no man can
‘ leave such a woman through caprice,
‘ I have a strong notion that want of
‘ fortune on one side, perhaps on both,
‘ prevents their union; and to shew you
‘ how truly, how tenderly, with what
‘ a disinterested passion I doat on So-
‘ phia, here, madam, take these notes,
‘ which her uncle returned to me, for

' ten thousand pounds; give them to
 ' her from yourself, if her delicacy will
 ' not permit her to think herself oblig-
 ' ed to me, though that can never be
 ' the case, for I cannot be happy till I
 ' see her so; and though my resigna-
 ' tion of her to another, is like the se-
 ' paration of my soul from my body,
 ' yet I submit readily to it. To see her
 ' blest I would this instant lay down
 ' my life with pleasure.'

So striking, so unexpected an instance
 of affection touched Mrs. Romney so
 forcibly, that it was some time before
 she could make any reply; her eyes
 discovered the emotions of her heart,
 before her tongue could pronounce
 them, which she did at last in terms
 quite satisfactory to her agitated nephew,
 who, in answer, only intreated her to
 hasten to her friend, and execute this
 commission in the best manner she
 could.

When Mrs. Romney presented the
 notes to Sophia, accompanied with all
 the

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the praises Sir William had lavished upon her, she was so much affected, that she could only articulate, ‘ Good heaven ! why cannot I love this man ? But my dear friend, added she, after a moment’s pause and recollection, if I had quitted your house soon after he came down (which your kind intentions in my favour would not permit me to do) Sir William’s esteem for me might not have risen so high. Perhaps it is not now too late. Give him back his presents, and tell him, that though I shall ever remember his offers with the most lively gratitude, they will be entirely useless to me. When my aunt Besfield comes to fetch Miss West, I will go with them. Time, my absence, and your kind endeavours, may restore Sir William to his former tranquillity ; and when that is restored, I will, with joy, return to my dear Mrs. Romney.’

Mrs. Romney, finding that nothing induced her to entertain more favourable thoughts about her nephew, consented,

fented, at last, to her departure, as she perceived that he really began to be very unhappy on her account.

When they met at dinner, there was an awkwardness and confusion in their behaviour, which was easily accounted for by Mrs. Romney. Glad would she have been to have found their appetites better; but was not in the least surprized that they were in no condition to receive any pleasure from it.

After the cloth was taken away, Sophia, instead of retiring, as Mrs. Romney expected, from the visible discomposure of her mind, staid below, and behaved with uncommon respect and regard to Sir William. This behaviour made his aunt hope that the last disinterested proof of his love had touched her nearly. On pretence, therefore, of writing letters, she left them together.

Sophia, who had waited for an opportunity to speak more plainly to her lover than she had yet done, as soon as
Mrs.

Mrs. Romney retired, said, ‘ I am entirely at a loss, Sir William, to express the just sense I have of the obligations I am under to you. I most sincerely assure you, if this assurance can any way lessen the uneasiness which my refusal may occasion, that I earnestly wish I could shew my gratitude in a manner more agreeable to you, than it is in my power to do. It gives me exquisite pain to find that you have so true an esteem for a person so undeserving as I am; and that you may be certain that I do not trifle with you when I say so, I positively declare, that it is not want of fortune which keeps me yet separated from the man of my choice, but my own perverse disposition. Judge then how very unfit an object I am to inspire a passion which I am so incapable of returning, and forget a woman from whom you have not the least reason to expect any felicity.’

At

At the close of this speech she rose up, and quitted him in spite of all his efforts to detain her.

As soon as Sir William had a little recovered from the surprize into which the above speech of Sophia's had thrown him, he rung for his favourite servant, in whom he had always placed great confidence, and ordered him, with the utmost secrecy and expedition, to find out the nature of Miss Fanbrook's engagement. This commission the fellow, who, as well as the rest of the domestics, was thoroughly acquainted with his master's particular attachment to her, promised faithfully to execute, and set off post directly to Mr. Besfield's for that purpose. He returned next morning before his master was stirring, and informed him of Miss Fanbrook's former engagement to Mr. Beecher; and of her refusing him; though Mr. Besfield's servants, from whom he had his intelligence, could not tell for what reason; all they knew was, that their master

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ter had received the news from abroad of his being married there.

This intelligence gave to Sir William some small glimmering of hope, as he flattered himself that she might, when her grief was a little abated, be brought to alter her present resolution. The grand obstacle to his success being removed by the marriage of Beecher, a pleasing prospect opened to his view, and he was carried by imagination to the summit of his wishes. Full of these animating ideas, therefore, he amply rewarded John for his diligence, and came down stairs more spirited than he was the day before.

Mrs. Romney, who was now afraid lest Miss West should see him again, went to Mrs. Greville in the morning, and engaged her to take a walk, while Sophia confined herself a good deal to her own apartment; but when she could not handsomely avoid Sir William's company, the high opinion she now entertained of his sincerity, and
the

the assurance she had of his esteem for her, shewed itself very evidently by her politeness to him. This proof of her sensibility, gratitude she thought demanded; and this alone gave him inexpressible delight. He really began to feel more real satisfaction than he had felt since the commencement of their acquaintance, and continually employed himself in calling forth new opportunities to give her pleasure.

The spring now advanced apace, and as Sophia had always expressed a great fondness for flowers, Sir William set out in his chariot one morning to a gardener's, a few miles off, in order to purchase some very fine hyacinths, which were blown earlier by the means of artificial heat, than they would have done in the natural ground, to present to her.

As soon as he was gone upon this errand, on the wings of love, Mrs. Besfield stopped at Mrs. Romney's in a post-chaise; and that lady, after having
related

related to her every thing which had passed between the two young ladies and Sir William, told her of Sophia's unalterable resolution to go to town with her.

Mrs. Besfield expressed much concern at finding that neither Sophia nor Juliet were like to be well married, and said, 'as she must go back as soon as the horses had rested, she would take Juliet, adding, that Sophia might come by the coach the day following.'

'No, my dear aunt, said Sophia, let me crowd in with you any where, rather than stay a moment longer, to give uneasiness to a man to whom I now wish the greatest felicity. Tell Sir William, continued she, turning to her friend, my dear Mrs. Romney, that I leave him because I cannot bear to see the pain which my presence occasions to him. Tell him also, that he may be assured of my perpetual gratitude.'

These

These expressions were the strongest she had ever made use of, with regard to Sir William; but she pronounced them without seeming to feel their force, and ran up stairs, to prepare for her departure, with so much precipitation, that Mrs. Romney, for the first time, was on that account displeased with her.

Mrs. Besfield and Mrs. Romney both agreed, that it was better not to appear to take any notice of Juliet's inclination, except she herself made a discovery of it, as the bare mention of her passion, though in order to condemn it, might prevent her from forgetting it. Mrs. Besfield went and fetched her away from Mrs. Greville's, who seemed to be quite easy, either about her continuance or removal, and said, she should soon follow them to London, as the country was excessively dull.

When the ladies were ready to depart, Sophia intreated Mrs. Romney still to love her, and to give her leave to come to her again, when Sir William was

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was gone. Vexed as Mrs. Romney was with her, she had too great a regard for her to refuse this request, especially as she saw that Sophia left her with the sincerest reluctance.

Little conversation passed on the road between Mrs. Besfield and her nieces. She only told them, that their uncle's affairs were in a way to be agreeably accommodated, with which news Sophia was truly rejoiced. That good uncle received her with the greatest marks of kindness on her arrival; but when she told him her reasons for coming to town, and mentioned Sir William in the manner he deserved, he could not help crying out, 'My dear Sophy, what a pity
' it is that you cannot love him, or
' that he cannot fix his affections on
' your cousin!'

Sophia blushed, and thus replied,
' I always desired earnestly to comply
' with your wishes, Sir, and never did
' I more desire to comply with them
' than at this instant. But O! my dear
' uncle—Beecher! Beecher!'

She

She could say no more; tears and sighs prevented her from proceeding. When she had a little recovered herself, she opened her whole heart to him; and after having begged him not to expose her weakness to her aunt, who might perhaps not judge so favourably of her as he would, told him her reasons for rejecting Beecher; and told him also, that for the folly she was guilty of by such a refusal, she could never forgive herself.

‘ It was certainly, my dear child, said
‘ Mr. Besfield, very absurd to act as
‘ you did; but as he is now married,
‘ and settled abroad, he has doubtless
‘ forgot you; and I think, therefore,
‘ that as Sir William Acres is so agree-
‘ able a man, and has shown so great an
‘ affection for you—you know what I
‘ mean—If you could prevail on your-
‘ self—but I am sensible that inclination
‘ is not to be forced, and that an union
‘ without it cannot be happy; there-
‘ fore you must judge for yourself. By
‘ and bye, perhaps, you may entertain
‘ thoughts

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‘ thoughts different from those which
‘ you have at present. I shall be glad
‘ to see a change in your sentiments,
‘ because I am truly of opinion, that no
‘ man can better deserve you.’

Sophia did not much relish the sentiments of her uncle, though she could not deny the justness of them, and spent her time in London, where every object revived the remembrance of Beecher, in a very melancholy manner. Juliet also thought but too frequently on the man whom she had left at Windsor to be chearful; and Mrs. Besfield began to be a good deal out of humour with her nieces.

Early in the morning, of the fourth day after their arrival in London, Mrs. Romney’s servant came in the greatest hurry to Mr. Besfield’s, with a note to Miss Fanbrook, which she immediately opened. It was from Mrs. Romney, and contained the following lines :

‘ I F

‘ IF my dear Miss Fanbrook has
‘ really the regard for me which she
‘ has so often professed, she will not
‘ refuse, at my particular request, to
‘ set out directly upon the receipt of
‘ this for Windsor. Thomas will have
‘ a post-chaise ready, at whatever hour
‘ she pleases to appoint, and will attend
‘ her to her affectionate friend,

And humble servant,

A. ROMNEY.’

Sophia was extremely alarmed at this hasty summons, and was greatly at a loss to account for her friend’s sudden desire to see her. She called up the servant who brought the embarrassing note, asked him if his mistress was not well, and whether any thing extraordinary had happened. Sir William, he told her, was very ill, indeed, and that his mistress was in a good deal of trouble about him; and that he had got a post-chaise waiting at the door. Upon this Sophia went to her uncle and aunt,
and

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and shewed Mrs. Romney's note to them. They advised her, by all means, to comply with the contents of it. But her careful uncle, seeing her look frightened and uneasy, though she expressed a great desire to be with her friend, told her, that he would accompany her, and come back the next day in the stage. This precaution in Mr. Besfield proceeded from his not knowing Thomas, and from some conjectures he had, that he might possibly have been corrupted by Sir William. For these reasons, therefore, he would not trust his niece with him.

Sophia soon made up her little packet, and stepped into the chaise.

During the journey Mr. Besfield endeavoured to make his niece as chearful as he could, yet so judiciously blended his encomiums on Sir William's generous disposition and disinterested affection, with the great advantages which would result from an alliance with such a man, that Sophia could not be

displeased with him, though her penetration would not suffer her to be ignorant that he very much wished to see her lady Acres.

When they arrived, Mrs. Romney met them at the door, and expressed great satisfaction at the sight of Sophia, though she looked quite harrassed and fatigued; and taking them into the parlour, ordered John, Sir William's servant, who had opened the door, to tell his master that Miss Fanbrook was arrived; and then sitting down by her, said, 'O! my dear, I have been so
' alarmed, and so uneasy, since you left
' me—You have almost been the death
' of poor Sir William.'

Sophia appeared in no small confusion at this opening of Mrs. Romney's, and begged she would tell her how he did, and what she could have done?

' Why, you know, said she, he was
' not at home when you went away.
' About half an hour after he returned.

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‘ The carriage was filled with the sweetest
‘ and most beautiful Hyacinths I ever
‘ beheld, so early in the season; all
‘ which he purchased for you; and
‘ stepping into the parlour with great
‘ satisfaction, having first charged John
‘ to bring the flowers in carefully, asked
‘ where you were. I believe I replied
‘ too abruptly, that you was gone, with
‘ your aunt Besfield and Miss West, to
‘ make some stay in town.’

‘ Gone! and gone to stay in London!
‘ cried he, looking full of astonishment.’
‘ But it is impossible for me to tell you
‘ what he said, my dear, or how he said
‘ it. He was in a perfect frenzy; he
‘ raved and walked about the room
‘ with such a wildness in his air, and
‘ made use of such expressions, that at
‘ last, though I was absolutely shocked
‘ and frightened, I was not a little pro-
‘ voked, and told him, that I was glad
‘ you had refused him, being sure, I
‘ said, that a man possessed of such vio-
‘ lent passions could never make a wo-
‘ man of your gentle disposition happy.’

‘ Do you call her gentle? said he.
‘ Can any body so cruel merit that appellation? And then, as if he thought
‘ he had been too severe, ‘ But I wrong
‘ her; she is all gentleness, all softness,
‘ all love and tenderness to every body
‘ but me; I am by fate singled out the
‘ wretched object of her hatred.’

‘ Here he threw himself into a chair,
‘ and covering his face with his handkerchief, seemed to be in such agonies
‘ of despair, that I could not help feeling for him. I sat down by him,
‘ begged him to listen to me, and to
‘ hear the cause of your leaving Windsor, which his impetuosity had prevented me from acquainting him with
‘ before. I told him that your going
‘ was out of a sincere regard for him,
‘ as you believed that your absence
‘ would cure him of a passion which
‘ had given him many uneasy hours,
‘ and that in time he might perhaps
‘ forget you.

‘ Forget

‘ Forget her ! replied he eagerly ; and
‘ does she suppose me ever capable of
‘ forgetting her ? O, Sophia, Sophia,
‘ how little, how very little are you yet
‘ acquainted with the impression which
‘ you have made upon me ? You may
‘ be assured, madam, continued he,
‘ these hopes are as vain as they are ill
‘ founded.’

‘ I could only reply that I was very
‘ sorry to see him so affected, and that
‘ I had said all in my power to per-
‘ suade you to stay, insinuating that you
‘ had no view in your departure, but
‘ the restoration of his peace of mind,
‘ of which he seemed to be deprived by
‘ your presence.’

‘ O never, never will it be restored
‘ by her absence, cried he. If she can-
‘ not bring herself to endure me as a
‘ lover, she may surely bear the sight
‘ of me as a friend. There are friend-
‘ ships, very strong ones, between peo-
‘ ple of all ages, of both sexes, and of
‘ all conditions ; and if she cannot be

‘ prevailed on to look at me in a softer
‘ light, why should she deny me the
‘ only consolation that is left for me?
‘ Her behaviour in this case is cruel in-
‘ deed. Were she actually at this time
‘ engaged to another, I should, perhaps,
‘ be unreasonable in desiring her con-
‘ tinuance here, though that engage-
‘ ment would not lessen my esteem for
‘ her; but I am satisfied she is free to
‘ chuse; for her lover, her Mr. Beecher,
‘ is married, and married abroad. I am
‘ no stranger to her story, madam, tho’
‘ you have all combined to keep me
‘ ignorant of it, and therefore am con-
‘ vinced that she might have staid here
‘ with safety, and with honour. It is
‘ for her company, it is for her conver-
‘ sation I languish; that she might
‘ have afforded me, without injuring
‘ herself, or giving offence to any body;
‘ but since I am cut off from what I
‘ most set my heart upon, I have no-
‘ thing to do but to wish myself re-
‘ moved from a world, in which I can
‘ expect no felicity.’

‘ Here

‘ Here he stopped; nor could I in-
 ‘ duce him either to speak, or to take
 ‘ any sustenance the rest of the day.
 ‘ Sometimes he walked up and down
 ‘ the room with the most violent mo-
 ‘ tion; sometimes he sat in sullen silence,
 ‘ absolutely regardless of every thing
 ‘ about him. At ten o’clock he retired
 ‘ to his chamber. I ordered some whey
 ‘ to be carried to him, but he would
 ‘ not touch it. I intreated him to let
 ‘ his man sit up with him, but in vain:
 ‘ and I confess, my dear, I could not
 ‘ close my eyes all night. In the morn-
 ‘ ing I carried up his tea myself, but
 ‘ could not make him eat a bit of any
 ‘ thing. He said he was very ill, and
 ‘ indeed John had told me before, that
 ‘ he believed his master was feverish.
 ‘ I sent for the physician, without let-
 ‘ ting him know my intentions, at whose
 ‘ arrival he was at first highly displeased.
 ‘ This gentleman, who has been long
 ‘ acquainted with the family, told me,
 ‘ when he came from him, that he
 ‘ could not procure any answers to the
 ‘ necessary questions which he proposed

‘ to him, in order to make himself master of his disorder. He seems, said the doctor, to labour under some great mental perturbation, and if no remedy can be luckily found out to remove it, I will not answer for the consequences.

‘ This intelligence almost distracted me with alarming apprehensions. I went up again. I endeavoured to reason with him, but to no purpose: I then told him that I must send directly for his aunt Acres, and declared that I would not, on any account, suffer him to remain with me alone. He smiled at this, and said, ‘ You had better not; but if you do, she cannot come, for she is confined to her bed, otherwise she would have been here long ago. I have a large cargo of her letters in my pocket.’ This was all he said for two whole days; sometimes he was in bed; sometimes he stamped about the room like a madman: but yesterday he was quite abandoned to despair, and was grown

‘ so weak for want of nourishment, that
‘ he kept entirely to his bed. I then
‘ asked him if I should desire you to
‘ come down again. You would have
‘ been struck with astonishment, if you
‘ had seen what a sudden alteration this
‘ question made in him. He started
‘ from his pillow, and said, ‘ If you ever
‘ expect to see me well again, madam,
‘ send for that dear creature directly,
‘ but say not you wish to see her on
‘ my account, for then perhaps she may
‘ refuse to come.’

‘ Troubled as I was, I could not for-
‘ bear smiling at his eagerness; but I
‘ made him first promise to try to
‘ drink some chicken-broth before I
‘ wrote.’

Here John, opening the door, obliged Mrs. Romney to break off. He brought his master’s respects to Miss Fanbrook, who he said would be very happy to see her, if she would do him the favour to come up with Mrs. Romney.

‘ Why, you have been a great while
‘ alone, John, said Mrs. Romney; has
‘ any thing happened to detain you so
‘ long?’ John replied, ‘ That nothing
‘ particular had happened; but that his
‘ master asked him a vast number of
‘ questions, and would rise, and go
‘ into the dressing-room, for fear a sick
‘ chamber should be offensive to Miss
‘ Fanbrook.’

Sophia blushed at the extreme delicacy of her lover, which more than any thing proved the violence of his passion; but yet did not feel compassion enough for him to apprehend, that the sudden removal into another room might be prejudicial to his health. She rose, however, to accompany Mrs. Romney, and said, ‘ O my dear friend, how concerned I am, that I have been the
‘ cause of so much disquiet to you?’
‘ Then, replied Mr. Besfield, who
‘ agreed to stay below, you need not
‘ be told, my dear Sophy, that you
‘ have it immediately in your power,
‘ by restoring Sir William’s health and
‘ peace

‘ peace of mind, to relieve the anxieties
‘ of your good friend here on his ac-
‘ count.’ Sophia only answered with a
sigh, and followed her friend.

When they entered the dressing-room,
they found Sir William sitting in an
easy chair. He rose at their entrance,
and thanked Sophia in the tenderest
terms, for so readily complying with his
aunt’s request. ‘ I dare not presume,
‘ madam, added he, to place this so
‘ long wished-for happiness to my own
‘ account; but if you will only con-
‘ descend to grant me the infinite plea-
‘ sure of seeing you now-and-then, I
‘ will no more complain of your cruelty,
‘ in denying me every other favour I
‘ have asked, because I see but too
‘ plainly, that our inclinations are not
‘ in our power.’

It was with some difficulty that he
could get out these few words, so much
was he lowered with illness and vexa-
tion. The paleness of his cheeks, the
heavy languor in his looks, and the

melancholy which was diffused over all his features, rendered his appearance so totally different from what it was when Sophia left Windsor, that the deplorable change in his person; to which she felt that she had been accessary, brought tears into her eyes, and she could hardly articulate, that she was sorry he had been so ill; that she hoped to see an alteration soon for the better. After she had, with much hesitation, uttered these words, she wiped away her tears, and being desirous of turning the conversation, as well as of giving some relief to his anxiety, she told him what a pleasant ride she had had down with her uncle; how much she was delighted with the returning spring, and how extravagantly she admired the country.

Sophia, by talking in this manner, made her return to Windsor appear more agreeable to herself; and what she said had the desired effect upon Sir William, who declared the joy it gave him to find that Windsor was not disagreeable to her.

Here

Here he was embarrassed, and stopped again. In short, he was so fearful of expressing too much rapture at the sight of her, and really felt so much, that he was quite at a loss for words; but his eyes, those faithful interpreters of the language of the heart, were not silent, but told her a thousand tenderesses which his lips were unable to pronounce. He was not, however, so entirely engrossed by the pleasure he received from her presence, as to forget that she mentioned her uncle, and desired Mrs. Romney would order a servant to conduct him up stairs; but that lady chusing to perform so polite a commission herself, left Sophia sitting by Sir William, to whom, though it was neither in her inclination, nor indeed in her power to say very kind things, yet she said a number of friendly ones, with respect to his health, and urged him to take care of himself in a manner which was sufficient to convince him that his recovery would give her pleasure.

‘ If I was certain, Miss Fanbrook, said
‘ he, that you really wished me better;
‘ that certainty, and the dear delight I
‘ should receive from seeing you more
‘ happy than you have hitherto appear-
‘ ed to me, would soon restore both my
‘ health and spirits, which have, I own,
‘ been greatly hurt by your abrupt de-
‘ parture from this place.’

Sophia, not a little confused at this charge, was nevertheless just opening her mouth to defend herself, but Sir William interrupted her ——

‘ I know what you would say, ma-
‘ dam, continued he; I know, too well
‘ I know, the situation of your heart by
‘ my own, and feel for you more than
‘ you can imagine. But since you will
‘ not permit me to show myself your
‘ lover, do not repel my approaches to
‘ you in the character of a friend. Let
‘ me, and I will not murmur at my
‘ untoward fate, have the sweet satis-
‘ faction of administering every conso-
‘ lation which you are capable of re-
‘ ceiving:

‘ceiving: and though I may never
‘be so completely blest, as to fill that
‘place in your heart which the happy,
‘happy Mr. Beecher once enjoyed, yet,
‘were you but less reserved, and more
‘explicit with me, I might, at least,
‘learn from your own dear lips his
‘powerful art of charming, and want
‘nothing but the mere figure to become
‘the very man.’

Sophia’s face was crimsoned with confusion, and she appeared to be so disconcerted at finding that Sir William was master of her secret thoughts, that he, ever attentive to each motion, pitied her embarrassment, and was so much afraid that he had gone too far, that he was not collected enough to proceed. His inability to speak, gave her time to assume all her courage.

‘And so, Sir, you know my reason,
‘said she briskly, for refusing Mr.
‘Beecher?’

‘No,

‘ No, madam, replied Sir William, that is a mystery, I confess, beyond my comprehension.’

‘ Then, said she, the first opportunity I have, I will explain it.’

Here she was interrupted by the entrance of her uncle and Mrs. Romney.

Sir William, weak as he was, felt himself so much elated with the thoughts of becoming the confident of his adored Sophia, that he received Mr. Besfield with a cheerfulness which surprized him, it was so unexpected. He thanked him in the strongest expressions, for bringing his amiable niece to Windsor, treated him with such warmth of civility, and behaved in so friendly a manner, that Mr. Besfield was more charmed with him than ever, and sat with him, at his particular request, a considerable time.

When Mr. Besfield proposed going to his sister Greville’s, Mrs. Romney, fearing

fearing that her nephew's strength was not equal to his spirits, insisted upon his taking some refreshment, as she said he had not eaten a bit of dinner, and appealed to Sophia, whether some refreshment was not absolutely requisite. 'Certainly, madam, said she, and I shall desire Sir William's leave to make his tea for him.'

This request was so new, so very obliging to Sir William, that he was almost wild with transport, and found his appetite now as much destroyed by the excess of joy, as it had been before by the extremity of uneasiness. However, as she smiled on him, from time to time, and pressing importuned him to eat, while her lovely hands were employed in recommending the nicest pieces of bread and butter to him, he could not well avoid eating some of them, though he was scarcely sensible that he did so.

As for Mrs. Romney, she was herself quite in love with Sophia, when she saw the
the

the amazing alteration which her return, together with the sweetness of her manners, had wrought in Sir William, for whom she had been alarmed.

Mr. Besfield returned to sup with Mrs. Romney, but both she and Sophia persuaded Sir William not to come down till the next day, lest he should be too much fatigued; and they sat with him till nine o'clock, and then, after Miss Fanbrook had presented his broth to him, wished him a good night.

Thus nursed, thus attended by the woman on whom he doated, and who, whatever she felt in her own breast, strove before him to be all life, gaiety, and spirits; he was hardly in his perfect senses, into such a delirium of joy was he thrown by her amiable officiousness.

When Sophia retired with Mrs. Romney, she could no longer support the character she had assumed, in order to forward Sir William's recovery. She relapsed into her former despondency, though

though Mrs. Romney caressed her with great fondness, and thanked her for exerting herself so chearfully in her nephew's behalf. Sophia asked her how he came to know any thing about Beecher. Mrs. Romney told her she fancied he procured his intelligence from his servant, who was a very shrewd fellow, and entirely devoted to his master.

Sophia said no more upon that subject to her friend, during the remainder of the evening. When she came down in the morning, Sir William met her in the parlour; and upon her telling him that she was glad to see him so much better, he replied, 'My recovery, madam, I attribute to your return; my life and death are in your power.'

Mr. Besfield, who was come to bid his niece adieu, smiled at this gallant little speech of the baronet's, and said, 'Since Sophia's influence is so great, Sir William, I shall leave my injunctions with her to make a charitable use of it.'

Sir

Sir William, charmed to find Mr. Besfield so much his friend, thanked him for his favourable opinion, and venturing to take hold of her hand (a liberty he had not for a long time attempted) he thought he saw, while he gently pressed it between his, a change in her countenance, though she did not immediately withdraw it; upon which he resigned it gently, with a tender sigh, and softly said, ‘ Do not be
‘ alarmed, my dear Miss Fanbrook;
‘ remember I only demand your friend-
‘ ship: Can you refuse me so innocent
‘ a satisfaction?’ She made no reply, but by that sort of smile which is rather forced by art than raised by nature. The conversation then turned on general subjects, till Mr. Besfield returned to London.

While Mrs. Romney was employed in giving some directions about her domestic affairs, Sir William reminded Sophia of her promise, relating to her refusal of Beecher: and she readily performed her promise, as the performance
of

of it fell in with the scheme which she had projected in her mind.

‘ My reason, said she, for refusing
‘ Mr. Beecher, was so weak, so absurd,
‘ so monstrous, that were I not desirous
‘ of letting you know how full of im-
‘ perfections I am, I should almost die
‘ with shame while I reveal it.’

She then told him all she had suffered on Beecher’s account; and when she had aggravated every circumstance of her folly, for such it certainly was,
‘ Now, Sir William, said she, you are
‘ acquainted with the inmost recesses of
‘ my heart; and after so free a disco-
‘ very, can you persist in having the
‘ least inclination for a woman who has,
‘ by the most ridiculous conduct, ruined
‘ her peace for ever?.

She had really drawn herself in a much worse light than she deserved, on purpose to disgust Sir William with the picture; but she entirely missed her aim by the caricatura. Instead of dis-

covering the surprize which she expected, for she hoped that the account which she had given of herself, would have shocked him extremely; he turned to her, and with the tenderest look and accent imaginable, said, ‘ And can
‘ you madam, so severely condemn
‘ yourself, for being guilty of only one
‘ error through your whole life—if it
‘ can be called an error—committed at
‘ an age when the mind is so generally engrossed by vanity and pleasure? No, Miss Fanbrook, do not
‘ flatter yourself (for he almost guessed
‘ her design, by her enlarging so much
‘ upon her faults) that this discovery will lessen you in my esteem;
‘ your noble frankness in confessing
‘ your failings, attaches me still more
‘ strongly to you; and I feel a particular pleasure in being possessed of an
‘ independent fortune, with which,
‘ whenever you will bless me by accepting it, I can satisfy your utmost
‘ wishes.’

Sophia

Sophia was so much disconcerted to find that her designs had not met with the success she hoped for, and that they had proved so ineffectual, that the confusion into which the disappointment threw her, made her appear in Sir William's eyes with a thousand additional charms; but the entrance of Mrs. Romney prevented him from resuming the most interesting subject on which he had ever opened his lips.

A day or two passed without any singular occurrences. Sir William grew more enamoured than ever; his health visibly returned, but he mended slowly. His late situation furnished a head, naturally fruitful in expedients, with new opportunities for the exertion of his generosity, and he spent a whole morning in his apartment, shut up there with a stranger, whom his servant had conducted in his chariot from London; while Sophia employed herself in her's, in ranging a fresh collection of flowers, which he had ordered to be placed there.

When

When they came down to dinner, Sophia blushed her thanks for the jonquils, with some of which she had dressed her bosom. Sir William approached her, and with an easiness in his air, which he had not for many days been master of, presented a folded paper to her, which still heightened the natural bloom of her cheeks.

‘ For me, Sir William? said she. What
‘ new proof of your friendship—since
‘ you will oblige me to receive perpetual
‘ marks of it—is this?’

‘ It is the only one, madam, said he,
‘ which I have left to give, since my
‘ heart is unworthy of your acceptance.’

She retired for a moment to the window, and was startled to find that it contained a parchment; but her astonishment surpassed description, when in that parchment she read his will, by which he bequeathed to her the greatest part of his estate, except a few legacies, among which was a very handsome

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some one to Mrs. Romney, as a token of his gratitude to her (those were his words) for the happiness he had enjoyed through her means, in the acquaintance of the amiable Miss Fanbrook.

Sophia took her seat at the table, but was so buried in thought, that she hardly either eat or spoke. Sir William was very attentive to help her to every thing which he imagined would be agreeable to her taste, and she received every mark of his attention with a more respectful embarrassment than she had ever appeared with before. She, however, seized the first opportunity to leave the room after dinner, in order to give a free vent to the various sensations of her heart. She actually taxed herself with the guilt of injustice to her lover, for whom gratitude pleaded in her divided breast so strongly, that she could not help throwing out a soliloquy in his favour. ‘Would my Beecher, said she, so situated, have acted in a manner so uncommonly disinterested?’ By this question she

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staggered herself not a little, and determined to hear Sir William with much more consideration than she had hitherto done, if she did not absolutely consent to marry him.

While she was in this agitation of mind, going through a severe self-examination, Mrs. Romney came up to her, to whom she gave the parchment with this speech: ‘O, my dear friend, what a man is this Sir William! I almost wish I was worthy of him.’

‘I thank heaven, said Mrs. Romney, that you wish you was; you are thereby in a fair way to be so—to be all that he can desire.’

Sophia went down to give her time to look over the will, and found Sir William at the harpsichord, practising a new air, which he had just procured for her entertainment. He rose when she came in. She went up to him wholly softened.

‘Sir

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‘ Sir William, said she, I cannot possibly express what I feel; you are, every way, so much my superior’——

He seized her hand which she had held out to him, and putting it to his lips, ‘ If I am but blest, said he, with Miss Fanbrook’s approbation, my wishes are satisfied.’

She felt herself so much affected, that in order to change the conversation, she begged him to sit down, and accompany her in the last new song, which she told him she would execute as well as her voice would let her.

Transported with delight, he immediately obeyed her, and she sung it in so charming a taste, with so much pathos, propriety, and grace, that he rose in the middle of a fine passage from the harpsichord, in raptures which were so violent, that she was really astonished at them, and was fearful even of excelling too much. She stopped immediately, and said (her face covered

with blushes) ‘ I believe I am quite
‘ wrong, Sir William.’

‘ No, no, thou lovely angel, replied
‘ he, overcome with pleasure, I never
‘ heard such enchanting sounds, such
‘ melting melody before: but my un-
‘ seasonable fallies of delight have made
‘ you, from a sweet diffidence, apprehen-
‘ sive of an error, of which you were far
‘ from being guilty, unless you think
‘ you have by so completely charming
‘ me committed one.’

Mrs. Romney at this instant joining
them, informed Sophia that she had re-
ceived a very polite enquiry after her
health from Mr. Dormer and his
sister. These were the most agreeable
neighbours she had, who spent the great-
est part of the year at Windsor, only
going to town during the most wintery
months. ‘ I must therefore, said she,
‘ make them a visit upon their return,
‘ and shall be glad if Miss Fanbrook
‘ will favour me with her company.’

Sophia

Sophia was visibly at a loss how to act on this occasion. She was very unwilling to contract any new connections, just at a time when her spirits were so indifferent: and she thought, that by refusing her friend's request, she should give Sir William reason to believe she chose to be left alone with him, and thereby encourage him to imagine that she was more inclined to listen to him than she really was. She therefore returned at first but a slight answer; but on being closely pressed by Mrs. Romney, consented, though with apparent reluctance, to wait on her; and Sir William grumbled a good deal at his aunt for depriving him of his amiable companion.

As Sophia, out of compliment to Mrs. Romney, dressed herself more than she had done since Sir William had been acquainted with her, he gazed at her with new pleasure. The fashion obliging her not to wear any thing upon her glossy hair, but an ornament of artificial flowers, discovered more of it than he

had yet seen; nor was her elegant neck, the colour and shape of which nothing could exceed, concealed by any thing thicker, that day, than a transparent gauze, trimmed with a fine blond lace; to which she added a nosegay of the beautiful flowers he had given to her.

Sir William, when the ladies left him, intreated them not to make a long visit, but to consider his forlorn condition. Sophia, to comfort him, assured him, that she would not have gone on any account, but to please Mrs. Romney. She had no reason, however, to repent of her complaisance; for though she was not in a disposition to relish it, the conversation was extremely agreeable, and entirely adapted to her refined taste.

Mr. Dormer had an exceeding fine person, and had greatly improved himself by all the advantages of a polite education. He was tall, perfectly well made, and had a grandeur in his air, and a dignity in his countenance, agreeably

ably softened by the sweetness of his disposition, and the affability of his manners. It is no easy matter to image a more charming man. He was of a very good family, and his estate, though not equal to Sir William's, was a much larger one than Mr. Beecher's. He was also next in succession to a title; his uncle, Sir Charles, after whom he was named, having no heir. But these advantages were of no consequence, when opposed to the beauties of his mind, and the virtues of his heart, which, considering his birth, and connections in high life, were certainly rather uncommon in a man at eight-and-twenty. His humanity and benevolence did not disgrace his other amiable qualities; on every occasion which offered, he gave the most pleasing proofs of them.

Mrs. Romney, before the desire of making himself agreeable to Sophia had wrought so great an alteration for the better in Sir William, often wished this gentleman to be acquainted with

her nephew, that he might see what a young man of fashion ought to be.

Miss Dormer had also something very prevailing in her manner, and nothing disgusting in her person, though far from being handsome; but by no means equalled her brother in the thousand excellent virtues which made him so truly a valuable member of society. She was but two years younger than her brother, and they had lived together ever since the death of their father.

As Mr. Dormer was master of most subjects, and had an uncommon manner of exciting the attention of his company, he soon drew the reserved Sophia into conversation, and as soon discovered that she was possesst of charms, both personal and intellectual, not frequently to be met with in the fair-sex. This discovery inspired him with an ardent desire to render himself still more agreeable to her; and it was with great regret he saw her depart, after a visit of an unusual length.

When Mrs. Romney and Sophia came home, Sir William advanced to meet them with an exclamation of joy at their return, and a gentle complaint of their long absence.

‘ Sure, Sir William, cried Sophia, with a cheerfulness in her air which rarely appeared in it, time has passed very heavily indeed with you; why it is not near nine o’clock.’

‘ I measure the hours by the absence of all that is dear to me, replied he, with a melancholy tone; but I am glad, madam, to find, by the cheerfulness of your manner, that they have been spent agreeably by you, whom I always wish to be entertained.’

‘ To be sure, said Sophia, neither Mr. Dormer nor his sister are dull company.’ ‘ No, indeed, replied Mrs. Romney;’ and then ran out into so many encomiums on them, particularly in favour of the gentleman, that Sir William looked at her, and then turned

his eyes on Sophia, to observe whether she was as much charmed with him as his aunt, who, though she uttered but little herself, very willingly assented to the opinions of her friend.

Sir William now began to suffer torments of a new kind, and quite different from those which he had already felt; for though he had endured the pangs of jealousy, from the moment he knew of Sophia's attachment to Beecher, yet as he was at so great a distance, and married too, he thought he had not much reason to be alarmed about him. But here was a man, of an unexceptionable fortune and character, just at hand, who most probably still more admired Sophia than she did him. The reflections which the appearance of this new rival conjured up in his mind, made so deep an impression on him, that they at once destroyed his appetite, and disturbed his rest.

He came down in the morning pale; perplexed, and unrefreshed. Sophia,
whose

whose spirits had been only slightly elevated by the sight of new objects, and the discussion of new topics, sunk into her former dejection when she retired to her chamber, and Beecher alone engrossed her thoughts. Roused from her reverie, by the frequent sighs of Sir William, when they met at breakfast, whose conduct had filled her with the highest esteem and pity, she went up to him, with the most winning softness in her address, and asked him if he was not well—if any thing had happened to give him disturbance?

‘ I do not know, madam, said he,
 ‘ somewhat recovered by her bewitch-
 ‘ ing manner, I do not know whether
 ‘ I ought to be disturbed; you are your-
 ‘ self the mistress of my destiny, and
 ‘ from you alone I can be informed,
 ‘ whether I am unreasonably disquieted.’

Sophia, surprized and concerned to find he was again chagrined on her account, replied, ‘ I should be very sorry,
 ‘ Sir William, to have done any thing

‘ designedly to give you uneasiness; if
‘ I have given you any painful sensations, I am sure they were not intended. But won’t you tell me, added
‘ she, in a beseeching accent, what fault
‘ I have committed?’

‘ You never have committed any
‘ faults; you never do commit any,
‘ madam, said he, but in pleasing too
‘ much: you may remember I told you
‘ so the other day, and I repeat it. If
‘ Dormer, from what he has seen and
‘ heard, during the few hours he enjoyed your company, is as much
‘ charmed with you as I am, what, what
‘ have I not to fear?’

‘ Good heavens! cried Sophia smiling, is that all? You would make me
‘ very vain indeed, Sir, to suppose that
‘ every man should think of me as favourably as you do.’

‘ It is very natural, Miss Fanbrook,
‘ replied he hastily, to imagine that
‘ what we doat on ourselves, will be
‘ warmly

‘ warmly admired by others; and if this
‘ gentleman has not yet shewn himself
‘ sensible of your infinite power of
‘ pleasing, you have declared so much
‘ in his favour, that there will be but
‘ faint hopes for those, who, though
‘ they may love you a thousand times
‘ more tenderly, may not be so happy
‘ as to inspire you with the same ten-
‘ derness in return.’

Sophia now perfectly understood the drift of Sir William’s speech, and as she really felt no inclination for Mr. Dormer, and was thoroughly sensible that this little fit of jealousy arose from the violence of his love, endeavoured, by the assistance of several flattering graces, which are never to be described, but which were ever ready to attend her, to make him amends for the distresses he had suffered from the terrors of imagination, and told him, with a laugh, that she was actually sorry to find he had so very indifferent an opinion of her, as to suppose she could take a fancy to a man at first sight.

Mrs.

Mrs. Romney, to whom she related what she had been saying to Sir William, joined with her in rallying him extravagantly, till at last he pretended that he was absolutely cured of his suspicions; but there was no difficulty in perceiving, that he was continually intimidated by the proximity of this formidable neighbour. A party for a walk, however, being proposed by Sophia, restored him, in some measure, to his former tranquility; but upon Mrs. Romney's declaring that she had hurt her foot, and was thereby rendered unable to accompany them, the chariot was mentioned. How they should all three sit in it, was the next dilemma which occurred. After a short pause, Mrs. Romney said, 'Why Sophia must either sit in your lap or mine.' Sir William thanked his aunt a thousand times for removing that obstacle, in a way which he dared not to have hinted at; and Sophia reddening, consented, because she was not willing, by refusing, to let him see that she was disgusted with him, especially as he had
never

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never taken an indiscreet advantage of those innocent liberties, which the familiarity in which they lived unavoidably occasioned, and almost encouraged; and which Mrs. Romney would have on no account permitted, if she had not looked upon Sophia in the light of a future niece, though she had never positively agreed to become so.

This little chariot-excursion put several schemes of the same nature into their heads, as they could, by this means, travel all together; and they, consequently, went at different times round the whole county, feasting their eyes with the fine houses and gardens, which are so numerous, and so beautifully scattered up and down in that part of England.

In a few days Mr. Dormer and Miss paid their respects to Mrs. Romney and Miss Fanbrook. In this visit Sophia entirely completed the conquest she had made of the above-mentioned gentleman. Sir William, at her request, received

ceived them, that he might, with his own eyes, be assured there was no impropriety in her conduct. Sophia, as she had never promised to attach herself to him alone, was certainly free to encourage any other lover; but her notions of honour were so extremely refined, that if she had thought Mr. Dormer the most desirable object in the universe, she would not have attempted to make herself agreeable to him, while Sir William professed so true a regard for her, and gave such proofs of his sincerity.

Sir William observed the behaviour of Sophia and Mr. Dormer with great attention: with an agitation of his whole frame, he marked every movement of their eyes, and watched every motion of their lips; and had soon an opportunity to be transported with the delicacy of Sophia's carriage, for which his grateful heart thanked her with the most expressive looks; looks unnoticed by Mr. Dormer, who was too much taken up with the object to which they were directed,

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directed, to perceive the eloquence of them. Dormer, indeed, after the ceremonials of politeness were adjusted, regarded Sir William no more than if he had not been in the room, but Miss Dormer made ample amends by her civilities for her brother's inattentions, as she soon felt something like a strong propensity to be lady Acres.

As for Sophia, she said but little; and when pressed by Mr. Dormer to give her opinion on the subjects he purposely threw out for it, modestly referred him to Mrs. Romney and to Sir William, who could scarce conceal his joy at the preference she so evidently gave him.

Music, among other things, being mentioned, Mr. Dormer asked Sophia if she would favour him with a song, telling her that from the sweetness of her voice, he was assured of the excellence of her vocal powers. She at first declined his request; but when he repeated it in a manner which excluded a refusal,

refusal, she looked at Sir William with so much significance, as if she waited for his approbation, that he joined, full of raptures, his intreaties to those of Mr. Dormer. She then complied, but not without urging her inability to perform, unless Sir William would accompany her with the instrument, assuring Mr. Dormer, with a smile, that she had never been taught by any other master.

Any body, except this gentleman, who had not the gift of penetration added to his other accomplishments, would have immediately discovered a singularity in the manner of Sir William and Sophia, in their behaviour to each other. Dormer himself saw nothing particular between them: his sister had sharper eyes, and saw a great deal.

Sir William, proud of his lovely scholar, left the choice of the airs to her, and she took care to pick out those which would shew her voice to
the

the least advantage. Her address upon this occasion was not forgotten by Sir William, when the company went: 'How engaging, my dear Miss Fanbrook, said he, have you been this evening! how amazingly good! what a sacrifice have you made! O, madam, continued he, turning to Mrs. Romney, she is quite adorable. Dorrimer is in love with her, and I saw how, in pity to my fond heart, she endeavoured to conceal her charming talents.' Mrs. Romney laughed heartily at her nephew, while Sophia only, with a smiling curtsy, acknowledged her gratitude for the satisfaction he had expressed at her behaviour. She was unwilling to enter more seriously upon the subject, and therefore thought, by treating it lightly, to elude a farther scrutiny into her sentiments.

Sir William, though his dear Sophia's gay sallies were very delightful to him, could not help being somewhat suspicious, as he had never seen her so mirthful

ful before, that this unusual flow of spirits was owing to the pleasure she found in the company of Dormer. As jealousy is a passion which drives away peace from the breasts of those who are fired with it, Sir William grew every day more and more restless, anxious, and alarmed. His health, instead of being re-established, was in a more uncertain state than ever. He had no comfort but when Sophia was with him, though her presence occasioned the most tormenting sensations. If she was chearful, he fancied Dormer, as he was become a frequent visitor, had seized all the avenues to her heart, by his superior skill in the art of love; if she appeared with a disconsolate aspect, her passion for him was incurable.

Sophia soon perceived the uneasiness which preyed upon him, and grew more and more circumspect in her carriage before Dormer, while that gentleman's devotion to her increased every hour.

Dormer

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Dormer did not attempt to conceal his feelings from his sister, who was rather desirous of forwarding his views than of interrupting them: for she flattered herself, that if she could assist her brother in disengaging Sophia from Sir William, she might, probably, supply her place in his affections. Yet, so very apt are the best kind of women in the world to be sarcastical upon their own sex, she could not help telling her brother, that she thought there was something excessively particular between Miss Fanbrook and Sir William. Dormer declared that he had not made the same remark, but added, that he had never seen so amiable a woman so free from coquetry in his life.

Miss Dormer, finding her brother deeply smitten, closed the conversation on that subject, hoping that he would make his addresses in form, gain his point, and leave room for her to try her fortune with the baronet.

As

As Mr. Dormer became rather brisk in his approaches, Sir William's terrors increased; and upon Sophia's returning one day some of his rival's politeness, which she could not overlook without being void of good-breeding, he turned aside, and with a deep sigh, cried, 'Happy, happy Dormer! These words were breathed in a whisper, but they were heard by every body in the room. Sophia's face was instantly covered with blushes; and after she had shewn Sir William, by the severest look she had ever assumed, how much she was displeased with him, she made some excuse to leave the company, and retired to her own apartment.

When Dormer was gone, Sophia flew down to Sir William. 'Tell me, Sir William, said she abruptly, what you could possibly mean by the words which you repeated just before I went out of the room? and what construction do you think the company must put upon them? Have you seen any thing in me, which has discovered the least propensity

‘ propensity to be pleased with Mr.
‘ Dormer’s gallantry? Good G-d! what
‘ must he think of me, after having
‘ heard you express yourself in such a
‘ manner?’

Sir William, who had never yet beheld such fire in her aspect, was almost terrified to death at the thoughts of having incurred her displeasure. He turned as pale as ashes, threw himself at her feet, and intreated her to pardon him, declaring that he knew not what he had said or done. She raised him immediately from his penitential posture, made him sit down by her, and assured him that she had, from her first acquaintance with Mr. Dormer, been so much upon her guard, that he could not possibly, with any reason, imagine she had exceeded the bounds of common politeness in his company. ‘ Why, ‘ therefore, Sir William, said she, ‘ softening her voice, should you suspect me of behaving with uncommon ‘ attention to him?’

‘ You

‘ You have given me, my dear Sophia, I confess, replied Sir William, no cause to entertain such a suspicion. I have been to blame; I do not suspect you now, continued he trembling, indeed I do not: can you forgive me? But Dormer is so formed to please (do not be angry with me) that I cannot be happy when I think of him; and as Mr. Beecher is married, and you are insensible to all the tender sentiments with which I endeavour to inspire you, who knows what may happen? How can you, my lovely Sophia, answer for your own heart? Tell me only, if you had seen Beecher, before you rejected him, but barely civil to another woman, whom you thought very agreeable, would not you have felt a pang?’

‘ O no, said Sophia, I was too well assured of his entire attachment to me, to doubt of his constancy a moment.’

But

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‘ But I am not so blest,’ replied Sir William; ‘ I have, on the contrary, your aversion to combat, as well as my own continual fears, lest another man may gain your affections. O Sophia! were you in my situation, you would know how to pity me.’

‘ And do you wish me in such a situation then?’ said she.

‘ No, my angel, replied he; heavens forbid that I should wish for any thing but your eternal felicity. Are you not convinced of that, when I would have given up all in my power to secure your happiness with Beecher? and would at this time give up all I have to secure it, were he returned, unmarried, and still your choice.’

‘ That he would be so, is certainly true,’ said Sophia, her eyes filled with tears, which the remembrance of him always occasioned. ‘ But will you be satisfied, Sir William, if I protest to

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‘ you,

‘ you, in the most solemn manner, that
‘ you have nothing to fear from any
‘ other man, and that you are next to
‘ Mr. Beecher in my esteem? Nay
‘ more, to prevent any farther re-
‘ proaches, if it were ever possible for
‘ me to feel for another what I have
‘ felt for him, I should for you alone
‘ have those feelings.’

As her face glowed with blushes while she uttered this speech, while the tears of recollection flowed down her cheeks, she strove to hide her confusion with her hand; which Sir William, gently seizing, pressed to his lips with such ecstasy, that though she tried to withdraw it, she could not for some time oblige him to part with it. He was all wild with rapture, and when his words found a passage, he delivered himself so incoherently, that Sophia was more than ever convinced of his passionate regard for her, and satisfied that his transports were sincere.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.



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